

Elworth C of E Primary School



Pupil Attendance Policy

Date:	September 2023
Review Cycle:	2 Yearly
Reviewed By:	S Roberts
Approved By:	TB approved by full Governors
Next review date:	September 2025
Nominated Governor:	Mr B Pitt

Overview

At Elworth C of E Primary School, we seek to encourage good attendance by providing a warm welcoming and stimulating environment, where we hope children will feel safe and happy. This policy aims to outline procedures regarding a child's absence from school. Any problems relating to absences will be handled in an appropriate and professional manner, according to the guidance set out in this policy and by the Local Authority.

Education is important. Missing school means missing out. Children should be at school, on time and ready to learn, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence that can result in legal action by the Local Authority. Please see further guidance on the Cheshire East website:

https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/schools/school-attendance/school_attendance.aspx

Why attendance at school and punctuality is important

- 98% attendance means that your child has missed 4 days in the school year
- 95% attendance means that your child has missed 10 days in the school year
- 90% attendance means that your child has missed 19 days in the school year
- 80% attendance means that your child has missed 38 days in the school year
- 5 minutes late each day means three whole days lost each year
- 17 days missed from school each year equates to a whole GCSE grade
- Attendance affects learning, future earning, wellbeing and a sense of belonging

What the law says:

The Education Act 1996, (the Act), requires parents and carers to ensure that their children receive efficient, full time education, either by regular attendance at school or by other means.

The Act states that:

“The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient full time education either by regular attendance at school or otherwise” (section 7).

“if a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school his parent is guilty of an offence” (section 444).

This policy aims to:

- foster a culture where regular attendance and punctuality are valued by all – teachers, parents and children;
- secure the support of parents and carers in ensuring that their children attend school regularly and that they arrive on time;

- improve the overall attendance of all children and reduce unauthorised absence, so that all children achieve 100% attendance - or as close as possible;
- develop positive and consistent communication between home and school with appropriate support and guidance; and
- provide a framework with clear roles and responsibilities.

At Elworth CE we aim to:

- maintain effective electronic records of attendance through school registers and take prompt action to follow up absences;
- investigate and act immediately where unauthorised absence is confirmed or suspected, Investigate and act immediately when authorised levels of attendance decrease to a lower level
- work effectively with other agencies, including the Local Authority attendance team/Cheshire East Consultation Service (CHECS), Safeguarding Children In Educational Settings team (SCIES), to seek advice and follow up attendance issues promptly and efficiently;
- monitor those children where attendance and punctuality give cause for concern and work with parents or carers to secure improvement; and
- respond promptly where concerns are raised by the Attendance Locality Support Officer and seek their advice and support where appropriate.

Absences

There are two types of absence:

- Authorised (where the headteacher approves the absence); and
- Unauthorised (where school will not approve the absence).

Elworth CE will only authorise absences due illness, medical or dental appointments or other exceptional circumstances. For example:

- close family bereavements;
- religious observance days;
- being the child of someone with the armed forces

When a child is unwell, it can sometimes be hard deciding whether to send them to school. The NHS has developed some simple guidelines to help parents and carers. Wherever possible, medical or dental appointments must be made outside of school time. If medical appointments are made within school hours, we will ask you for medical evidence so that our records are up to date and clear.

Where a child is off sick, parents and carers must always provide the reason. We require parents and carers to contact school on **each day** of absence until the child returns to school. If parents fail to contact the school, then absences will be recorded as unauthorised. If we do not hear from parents about their child's absence, we may complete a home visit to ascertain the whereabouts of the child.

If the absence is long-term, or repeated, we may also request medical evidence of illness. This can be in the form of a doctor's note, a prescription, evidence of medication, or appointment letters/cards. If satisfactory medical evidence is not provided, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

Monitoring absences

Where a child's attendance reaches 95% we will begin to monitor their absence. This means looking at their attendance certificate and seeing if there are any patterns in absences or reasons, other than illness, which is causing attendance to drop.

If your child's attendance drops below 95% due to unauthorised absences we will be in contact with parents/carers to discuss our concerns. The course of action taken following this will be based on individual circumstances. Attendance issues which drop below 90% are likely to be discussed with our LA attendance team during our termly liaison meetings.

Long term Medical Needs Absences

Children with specific medical needs may require further time off school for appointments, surgery or due to illness relating to their long-term condition. We ask that parents discuss needs with relevant staff in school so that we can be aware of this and the implications it could have on attending school regularly. We may ask for proof of long-term medical needs (doctors letters) to keep our records up to date and clear. The best course of action to help support regular attendance/access to education, will be discussed with parents.

Holidays and unauthorised absences

Government Legislation from 1 September 2013 amended the provisions of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 so that Headteachers cannot authorise any leave of absence in term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

If you are thinking of booking a term time holiday/leave of absence we ask that absence request forms are completed at least two weeks in advance of the first day of absence. We will aim to respond to requests as quickly as possible with the outcome of the request clear stated. We will include information if a referral to the LA will be made for a possible 'Penalty Notice Fine'.

There is no longer any provision for 'holidays' in the regulations, parents and carers do not have any entitlement to take their children on holiday during term time. We expect parents and carers to plan their holidays during the 13 weeks when schools are closed. In most cases, any requests for time off during term time will be unauthorised.

*Please note- we submit information to the LA for holiday/absence fines but it is the LA who makes the final decision.

Where leave of absence is not approved and the child does not attend school it will be recorded as unauthorised. Teachers will not provide school work to be completed during any period of unauthorised absence.

Each application for a Leave of Absence will be considered on a case by case basis and on its own merits.

Fixed Penalty Notices

Parents and carers should be aware that the school has a duty to report unauthorised absences/holidays to the Local Authority, who may then issue a warning notice period/fixed penalty notice.

This can be for:

- 10 unauthorised absences across the term
- 10 consecutive unauthorised absences (eg. unauthorised holiday).
- 10 unauthorised absences in a term due to lateness beyond 9.25am.

Please note that for unauthorised holidays, a £60 fixed penalty notice may be issued to each parent or carer who fails to ensure their children's regular attendance at school. For example, in a family with two children and two parents, each parent will receive a fine of £120 to be paid within 21 days. This rises to £120 per child, per parent, if payment is made after 21 days. In all cases payment must be made within 28 days. Non-payment of the fixed penalty notice may result in prosecution in the Magistrates Court.

Punctuality

Children regularly arriving late not only interrupt their education, but also that of their peers. This affects the positive start to the day that we want for all our children. Children with regular absence also miss continuity of teaching and their progress may be impacted.

Arriving at school on time is key to ensuring a prompt start to the day:

EYFS children:

- Gates open at 8:40am and registration is at 8:45am. The school day ends at 3:10pm.
- Gates will be locked at 8:50am and children who arrive late are asked to come through the main office entrance. Parents will need to give a reason for lateness.
- Lateness can be marked as 'late before register closed' or 'late after register closed'. If your child is later than 9:10am then they will be marked as 'late after register closed'. This can impact on your child's attendance percentage.

EYFS and KS1 children:

- Gates open at 8:35am and registration is at 8:40am. The school day ends at 3:10pm.
- Gates will be locked at 8:40am and children who arrive late are asked to come through the main office entrance. Parents will need to give a reason for lateness.
- Lateness can be marked as 'late before register closed' or 'late after register closed'. If your child is later than 9:10am then they will be marked as 'late after register closed'. This can impact on your child's attendance percentage.

KS2 Children:

- Gates open at 8:35am and registration is at 8:40am. The school day ends at 3:20pm.
- Gates will be locked at 8:40am and children who arrive late are asked to come through the main office entrance. Parents will need to give a reason for lateness.

- Lateness can be marked as 'late before register closed' or 'late after register closed'. If your child is later than 9:10am then they will be marked as 'late after register closed'. This can impact on your child's attendance percentage.

Where a child is repeatedly late, we may discuss this with the LA attendance team.

Procedures

Rightly, parents and carers hold the school to account for the quality of education provided. Likewise, the school holds parents and carers to account for supporting their child by:

- ensuring they come to school promptly each day and
- not taking time off school unnecessarily.

Elworth CE's procedures for managing and recording attendance are set out below.

Registers

Registers provide the daily record of attendance for all children; they are legal documents and have to be marked twice daily. A register may also be required in a court of law as evidence in prosecutions for non-attendance. Registers are marked using the codes advised by the Department of Education; one school day is marked as two sessions – morning and afternoon.

Elworth CE operates a 'first day' response system. In practice, this means that parents and carers are asked to telephone school using the dedicated answering machine on the first morning of their child's absence. We also ask that you ring on any subsequent days of absence to ensure reasons are recorded accurately and timely.

Office staff/attendance staff check registers promptly each morning; where there has been no message to say why a child is absent, an email is sent requesting an explanation. A note is then placed in the electronic register recording the reason for the absence. The office staff will also follow up those cases where there is no response to the text message. Where we fail to establish contact, or the reason given is not accepted, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. In some circumstances, we may complete a home visit to ascertain the whereabouts of a child.

Registers are checked regularly and any patterns of absence or unexplained absence noted and discussed with parents or carers and, where appropriate, the Local Authority Attendance Team.

