

Elworth C of E Primary School



Pupil Attendance Policy

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Review Cycle:	2 Yearly
Reviewed By:	S Roberts
Approved By:	Barrie Pitt/Neil Garratt August 2024
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Nominated Governor:	Mr B Pitt

INTRODUCTION

Overview

At Elworth C of E know that 'good attendance begins with school being somewhere pupil's want to be and therefore the foundation of securing good attendance is that school is a calm, orderly, safe and supportive environment where all pupils are keen and ready to learn.'
(*Working together to improve school attendance 2024.*)

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. Education is everyone's business. 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

Attendance team

'Improving attendance is everyone's business.' (*Working together to improve school attendance statutory guidance, 2024*).

At Elworth CE Primary School we have a whole school culture of good attendance and punctuality. Our attendance team is made up of:

Neil Garratt (Headteacher and Senior Attendance Champion)

Sara Roberts (Attendance Champion)

Natalie Dunning (Attendance Champion)

Any concerns/questions in relation to attendance need to be sent to
admin@elworthce.cheshire.sch.uk

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.

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 are ready to learn, 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 expected to telephone or email school 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.

The attendance team 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 initial email. This could result in a telephone call from one of the attendance champions or a safe and well home visit. Where we fail to establish contact, or the reason given is not accepted, 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 or your child has over 15 days ill within two consecutive half terms we may be in contact with parents/carers to discuss our concerns. The course of action taken following this will be based on individual circumstances. If attendance continues to decline and drops below 90% parents will be contacted again and we will look to meet with parents to discuss barriers to regular school attendance. We will work alongside parents to support children to come into school on time and consistently.

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 to illness, medical or dental appointments or other exceptional circumstances. For example:

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

Illness (authorised absence)

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 safe and well check (home visit) to ascertain the whereabouts of the child. If children are off sick for 15 days within two consecutive half terms, we will be in contact with you about this to see if there is anything we can do to support.

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.

If a child is off school because they are unwell, we do not have to supply work to the child to complete at home.

If you contact school and declare that your child is unwell but we have reasonable doubt to believe that they are not, we may ask for further evidence to prove the illness.

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.

Reason to believe

If we have a reason to believe that a parent has contacted school to say that their child is unwell but they are on holiday or off school for another reason we can complete a penalty warning notice/fine application to the Local Authority. We can also request additional information from parents to clarify absences School can also:

- Complete a home visit
- Contact you to check your dialling tone

Safe and well checks

A safe and well check is a visit which is completed by two members of staff to ascertain the whereabouts of children and/or check in with them to ensure that they are safe.

School can complete safe and well checks should we have good enough reason to do so.

If a child is off long term safe and well checks will be completed often but this will be decided on a case-by-case basis.

School staff do not hold responsibility in getting your child to and from school. This is the responsibility of the parent/carer.

Holidays and unauthorised absences

Significant changes to attendance legislation mean that Headteachers can only authorise term time leave/absences in exceptional circumstances. Each case will be looked at on a case-by-case basis. On most occasions from September 2024, term time absences **will not** be authorised.

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 clearly stated. We will include information if a referral to the local authority will be made for a possible penalty notice fine or notice period.

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 Local Authority for holiday/absence fines but it is the local authority 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.

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 consecutive (5 days) unauthorised absences
- 10 unauthorised absences (5 days, in a 10-week period) due to lateness beyond 9.10am (U code on the register) or another unauthorised code

It is important to note that unauthorised codes can be used in conjunction with one another to build up multiple unauthorised absences. This can then result in a penalty notice warning or fine.

Fines

From September 2024 there is a new National Framework for Penalty Notices.

Penalty notice fines will continue to be issues per parent per child. For example, 3 siblings absent for term time leave would result in each parent paying three separate fines.

Offences (three year rolling offence framework)

First offence

The first time a penalty notice is issues for term time leave or irregular attendance the fine will be charged at:

£160 per parent, per child if paid within the 28 days of the issues, reducing to £80- per parent per child if paid within 21 days.

Unpaid penalty notices may result in a parental prosecution.

Second offence

Where it is deemed appropriate to issue a second penalty notice to the same parent for the same pupil within 3 years of the first penalty notice, for either term time leave or irregular attendance the second penalty notice will be charged at £160 if paid within 28 days (unpaid penalty notices may result in a parental prosecution).

Third offence

On the third time that an offence is committed within 3 years a penalty notice will not be issued. It is likely that the case may proceed to parental prosecution under the Single Justice Procedure. If found guilty of the offence 'failure to send a child to school' the magistrates can impose a fine up to £1000 or legal proceedings under Section 444 (1a) can include a fine of up to £2500.

Warning Periods

Warning periods can be put in place by school and the local authority where children have irregular attendance or have had term time leave. This warning period will mean that children

have to attend school for a set period of time across a half term without any further days of unauthorised absence. Should there be failure to comply with this, fines will be administered.

It is important to note that the three-year rolling programme works nationally and if families move into a different local authority, the attendance history will move with them.

Punctuality

Children are expected to arrive at school ready for the school day and ready to learn.

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 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 8:45am 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 and can result in warning notices/fines being given.
- School ends at 3:10pm

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 8:45am 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.
- School ends at 3:20pm

If a child has a late mark on the register this is an unauthorised code. These unauthorised codes can be used in conjunction with other unauthorised codes. If a child gets 10 sessions of any unauthorised code on the register within a ten-week period then you may face a penalty warning notice or fine.

It is important to note that registers must close at 9:10am and children arriving later than this will be marked as late.

Activities in term time

When children take part in sporting, production or other activities during term time we will need to seek advice from the Child Employment Team. Once we have taken advice from them, we will then be able to map out the best course of action based on the information they provide and through using the information which we have in school.

The Headteacher does not have to authorise activities in term time.

Organisations asking children to take part in term time activities (such as motorbike racing) need to have a licence in place. Not having the appropriate licence will impact on the Headteacher's decision regarding the absence request.

<https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/schools/school-attendance/children-employment-entertainment/children-in-entertainment.aspx>

You need to apply for the licence yourself and email it to the child employment team. All of this information can be found of the link above.

Mental Health and attendance

Elworth CE sets out and maintains high expectations for the attendance, engagement and punctuality of children who are anxious about attending school. We recognise that attendance at school may serve to help with the underlying issue as much as being away from school might exacerbate it, and prolonged periods of time off can heighten anxiety about attending in the future.

We will work with families to help remove barriers to school refusal due to mental health issues, however parents are responsibility for ensuring their children attend school on time and regularly. School does not have to complete home visits to try and encourage children to attend school.

Where required, school will put in place reasonable adjustments to ensure school is accessible for children with mental health difficulties.

If children are off school due to a mental health concern, parents still have to contact school on each day of absence and actively work with school to reintegrate their child back into education.

If you ring school to declare you child will remain at home for a 'wellbeing day' one of our attendance team will be in contact you to discuss this and decide if this can be an authorised absence or not.

Part-time timetables

In exceptional circumstances linked to mental or physical health we may decide that your child requires a part time timetable. Where a child is of compulsory school age, both the parent who the child normally lives with and the school agree the child should temporarily be educated on a part time basis we will submit information to the Local Authority Attendance Team to state when the timetable started, and an end date.

It is important to note that part time timetables can not be used for behavioural purposes and are only short-term measures. Children working on part time timetable in school will also be asked to take work home with them (should this be appropriate).

It is the school's decision whether or not to introduce a part time timetable.

Local Authority Support

The attendance team will have links during the school years with our Attendance and Children out of Education Team. During these targeted support meetings, cases of regular illness and unauthorised absences below 95% may be discussed with the linked attendance officer.

Policy links

Working together to improve school attendance August 2024

Summary of responsibilities where a mental health issue is affecting attendance February 2023

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024

Elworth C.E Child protection and safeguarding policy

Children's mental health- every mind matters