



Elton Primary School & Nursery

# Attendance Policy

*In our school, the wellbeing and education of all our children comes first*

<b>Full Governors</b>	Summer 17
<b>Review</b>	Summer 18

## INTRODUCTION

	<b>Responsibility</b>
Headteacher	To monitor attendance throughout the school
Office Administrator	To monitor the attendance situation of individual children and make first day of absence contact with parents / carers. To liaise with EWO to follow up persistent absentees. To contact parents and ensure that they are aware
Class teachers & Headteacher	To raise the level of attendance of those children identified as being at risk/persistent absentees. To work together to protect the welfare of all children in school
Lead Governor	To oversee all aspects of attendance monitoring and actively support school to achieve maximum attendance of all children.
EWO	To support the school in achieving its' objectives by following the Local Authority Guidelines.

### **Attendance Policy Statement:**

Good attendance is essential if pupils are to take full advantage of school and gain the appropriate skills, which will equip them for life.

Elton Primary School and Nursery aims to achieve good attendance by operating an attendance policy within which staff, pupils, parent(s)/carer(s), local community and the Education Welfare Service can work in partnership. The school will actively monitor attendance daily to aim to ensure quick and early intervention if a problem is identified.

All staff will encourage good attendance and will liaise with home and partner agencies if this is appropriate. Good attendance will be seen as an achievement in its own right and recognised as such by the school. The attendance policy is based on the premise of equal opportunities for all.

### **Aims:**

- To improve the quality of school life.
- To ensure access to a full curriculum and all learning opportunities for all children.
- To create a culture in which good attendance and punctuality is normal and always expected.
- To demonstrate to pupils, parent(s)/carer(s) and staff that the school values good attendance and to recognise that good regular attendance is an achievement in itself.
- To ensure that children make the best possible academic progress through attending the maximum number of lessons in a school year.
- To value the individual and be socially and educationally inclusive.

## **Objectives:**

- To involve the children in their school attendance and punctuality.
- To continue to communicate with parent(s)/carer(s) about the importance of regular school attendance and punctuality.
- To recognise the important role of class teachers and office administrators in promoting and monitoring good attendance.
- To ensure time and organisation within the school to enable the aims and objectives to be met.
- To continue building an effective working relationship with the Education Welfare Service.
- To continue reporting our half-termly figures to the Education Welfare Service as required and termly figures to the Governors as required.

## **Targets:**

- To have an effective means of collecting and monitoring attendance information.
- To discuss the setting of targets for the school with the Education Welfare Officer and the School Improvement Partner where appropriate.
- To ensure that such data is available and used effectively by school leaders and staff in conjunction with the EWO.
- To agree specific targets for individuals, groups, years and the whole school in a context of all known relevant factors and record these where appropriate.
- To ensure that the school is aware of government targets which may have been set for some vulnerable groups, such as Looked After Children.

### **Parent(s)/carer(s) will be advised of our policy on attendance:**

- When their children first start at school via our new intake home visits, our home/school contracts and in our school prospectus, where expectations are clearly outlined.
- Through our regular weekly newsletters and termly attendance.
- At parent(s)/carer(s) evenings.
- On our website and through our blog.

### **Children will be advised of our policy on attendance:**

- In our celebration assemblies.
- In the classroom.
- During appropriate areas of the curriculum.
- On our website
- The Headteacher will regularly remind children and parent(s)/carer(s) of the importance of good attendance and punctuality through the blog, letters home, website etc.

## **First Day of Absence Procedure:**

- Children are expected to attend school for the full 190 days of the academic year, unless there is a good reason for their absence. There are two types of absence:
  - - Authorised (where the school approves pupil absence)
  - - Unauthorised (where the school will not approve absence)
- If the child is absent it is expected that parents / carers will provide an explanation on the first day the absence occurs at the start of the school day. Office staff can then enter the appropriate absence code on to the electronic attendance register.
- If contact explaining the child's absence, fails to be made by parents / carers, then the school will attempt to contact the parents / carers by telephone on the first day of the absence.

## **Identification & Referral:**

- Identification is made by the class teachers and /or office administrators regarding a cause for concern.
- Concerns are passed to the Headteacher who decides when it is appropriate to discuss the matter with the parent(s)/carer(s) to establish any issues or to identify any support services the family may benefit from.
- If there is no improvement the matter will be referred to the Education Welfare Service.
- If there is no improvement an attendance letter may be sent and parent(s)/carer(s) can be invited in for a meeting.
- Through discussion with the EWO a fine may be levied upon parents (see appendix A).
- The aim of this process is to reinforce parental duty to ensure full school attendance and to offer support by providing links to other agencies as appropriate.

### **Completing the Attendance Register:**

- Attendance registers are completed electronically using SIMS in the classroom. All class teachers, regular supply teachers, teaching assistants and office administrators are trained in the use of SIMS.
- Registers provide the twice daily record of the attendance of all pupils.
- The register is completed using the codes advised by the DFE and Cheshire West and Chester Council (copy attached).
- The official completed monthly register is printed out at the end of each month and filed. **This is a legal document and is safely retained in accordance with the law.**
- A number of different groups are covered by the generic term Traveller – Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, Showmen, and Circus people, Bargees and New Travellers. The 'T' code is used when Traveller families are known to be travelling for occupational purposes and have agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision. It should not be used for any other types of absence by these groups.

### **Lateness:**

School begins at 8:55am and all pupils are expected to be in school for registration at this time. Twenty five minutes after the close of registration a late mark becomes an unauthorised absence.

Pupils arriving late are signed in at the school office, where the reason for lateness is discussed with the parent / carer. If this is persistent, parents are advised that pupils who are late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of others.

Where persistent lateness gives cause for concern further action may be taken.

### **Holidays during term time:**

Parent(s)/carer(s) do not have the right to take their child out of school for a holiday. In **exceptional** circumstances only the Headteacher may choose to grant leave of absence (please see Appendix B). Parents are required to write to the Headteacher outlining the reason for the absence in advance. A response is then given to the parent whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. Unauthorised absences due to holidays are strongly discouraged in accordance with regulations and parents are advised in writing that unauthorised holiday codes may trigger a fixed penalty notice. (exemplar letter attached).

### **What else can parent(s)/carer(s) do to help?**

- Let the school know as soon as possible why their child is absent.
- Reinforce to their child the importance of attending school.
- Not allow their child to have time off school unless it is really necessary e.g. by making routine medical appointments outside of school hours if possible.
- Be punctual.

### **In Summary:**

The school aims to have ALL children attending regularly and punctually and parent(s)/carer(s) need to know that should their child fail to attend in this way then the matter will be referred to the Education Welfare Service.

In developing this Attendance Policy we have taken into account the fact that Cheshire is an ethnically diverse community. The school has incorporated practice, which guards against disadvantaging any sections of the community. Improving the performance of underachieving pupils is a key priority in the School Development Plan. This aims to improve the attainment of minority pupils across the Local Authority. Schools are aware and take into account the need for all public authorities to re-examine and make changes to their practice in promoting genuine multi-racial partnership.

The school understands the need for on-going communication with parent(s)/carer(s) and pupils regarding this policy, particularly those new to the school.

Guidance from the LA about Fines

## Legal Framework

1.1 The law empowers designated Cheshire West and Chester Borough Council Officers, head teachers - including their nominated deputies - and the Police to issue Fixed Penalty Notices to the parents of children who have unauthorised absence from school.

1.2 The rules governing the implementation of these powers and the factors that should be taken into account when issuing a Fixed Penalty Notice are outlined in:

- The Education Act 1996;
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006;
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007; and
- Guidance published by the Department for Education, in particular the “Guidance on Education–Related Parenting Contracts, Parenting Orders and Penalty Notices 2007, and Ensuring Children’s Rights to Education”.

1.3 In addition, the issuing of Fixed Penalty Notices must comply with other legislation, such as the Human Rights Act and all relevant Equal Opportunities legislation, in order to ensure that they are used in a fair and consistent manner.

1.4 To that end, Cheshire West and Chester Borough Council is responsible for developing a protocol with which all the partners named in the legislation will work.

## Rationale

2.1 Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that: “The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable ... to his age, ability and aptitude, and ... to any special educational needs he may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.”

2.2 Therefore, regular and punctual attendance at school or alternative provision is a legal requirement, as well as being essential to enable children to maximise their educational attainments and opportunities.

2.3 Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, makes it a criminal offence for a parent to fail to secure their child’s attendance at the school at which they are registered, where that absence is not authorised by the school.

2.3. The definition of “parent” includes all natural parents, whether they are married or not; and includes any person who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility and/or care for a child or young person.  
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2.4 Fixed Penalty Notices are one of the sanctions available for this offence and offer a means of swift intervention.

## Payment of Fixed Penalty Notices

3.1 Arrangements for payment will be detailed on the Penalty Notice.

3.2 Payment of a Fixed Penalty Notice discharges the parent’s liability for the period in question and they cannot subsequently be prosecuted under other enforcement powers for the period covered by the Fixed Penalty Notice.

3.3 If the Fixed Penalty Notice is paid:

- within 21 days the penalty payable is £60; or
- within 28 days the penalty payable is £120.

3.4 Payments will not be accepted from parents after the 28 days.

3.5 Penalty Notices cannot be paid either in part or by instalments.

## Appendix B

Guidance from the NAHT (National Association of Headteachers) about 'EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES'

There is some debate about what 'exceptional circumstances' means when deciding whether to grant absence for students during term time.

We believe it is valuable to have some guiding principles to back schools in their decisions and provide consistency. This guidance has no statutory authority and is not imposed upon schools.

1. The decision to authorise absence is at the head teacher's discretion based on their assessment of the situation. Circumstances vary from school to school and so there can be no absolute rules on this subject.
2. Term times are for education. This is the priority. Children and families have 175 days off school to spend time together, including weekends and school holidays. Heads will rightly prioritise attendance. The default school policy should be that absences will not be granted during term time and will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances.
3. If an event can reasonably be scheduled outside of term time then it would not be normal to authorise absence.
4. Absence during term time for holidays/vacations is therefore not considered an exceptional circumstance.
5. Absences to visit family members are also not normally granted during term time if they could be scheduled for holiday periods or outside school hours. Children may however need time to visit seriously ill relatives.
6. Absence for a bereavement of a close family member is usually considered an exceptional circumstance but for the funeral service only, not extended leave.
7. Absences for important religious observances are often taken into account but only for the ceremony and travelling time, not extended leave. This is intended for one off situations rather than regular or recurring events.
8. Schools may wish to take the needs of the families of service personnel into account if they are returning from long operational tours that prevent contact during scheduled holiday time.
9. Schools have a duty to make reasonable adjustments for students with special educational needs or disabilities.
10. Families may need time together to recover from trauma or crisis. Guidance on authorised absence in schools (October 2014)
11. It is acceptable to take a student's previous record of attendance into account when making decisions.
12. It is important to note that head teachers can determine the length of the authorised absence as well as whether absence is authorised at all. Any examples provided are illustrative rather than exhaustive. The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, unavoidable and short. And by 'unavoidable' we mean an event that could not reasonably be scheduled at another time.

Exceptional circumstances could include:

1. Service personnel returning from a tour of duty abroad where it is evidenced the individual will not be in receipt of any leave in the near future that coincides with school holidays.
2. 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.
3. The death or terminal illness of a person close to the family.

4. To attend a wedding or funeral of a person close to the family.
5. Where there are exceptional and unforeseen circumstances that fall outside of 1 to 4 above, the Headteacher can consult with the education welfare officer prior to any authorisation being given to the parent.

**Please note:** evidence would be required in each case.

The education (pupil registration) (England) (amendment) regulations 2013, which came into force on 1 September 2013, removed references to family holidays and extended leave as well as the notional threshold of ten school days.

The amendments made clear that head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless 'exceptional circumstances' exist. The regulations also stated that head teachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if leave is granted for 'exceptional circumstances'.

Ofsted have confirmed that their focus is on whether recurrent absence is being addressed; only if there is an issue with this will they look more deeply into why the school has authorised absence. Concern about inspection should not govern schools' decisions in this area. Head teachers are under pressure to meet overall absence thresholds however.

Further guidance and information can be found here:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/518586/Advice\\_on\\_school\\_attendance.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/518586/Advice_on_school_attendance.pdf)

Leave of Absence Form



I have parental responsibility for the following student and I am requesting authorisation for them to be absent from school as detailed below:

NAME OF STUDENT: ..... YEAR..... Class .....

ABSENCE DATES: From ..... / ..... / ..... to ..... / ..... / ..... (Inclusive)

TOTAL SCHOOL DAYS TO BE ABSENT: .....

The reason that this absence is being requested during term-time is because:

.....  
.....  
.....

Signed: ..... (Parent/Carer) Date: .....

Name(s) of brothers/sisters in other schools:

Name: ..... School.....

Name: ..... School.....

(PARENTS/CARERS PLEASE ALSO COMPLETE YOUR PART OF THE REPLY SECTION BELOW)

**REPLY SECTION**

NAME OF STUDENT: ..... YEAR..... FORM.....

REQUESTED ABSENCE: From ..... / ..... / ..... to ..... / ..... / ..... (Inclusive)

**HEADTEACHER'S DECISION**

Your request is authorised on this occasion

\*Your request is **NOT** authorised on this occasion because:

**\* Parent/Carer may receive a Fixed Penalty Notice if you take your child out of school**

.....  
.....

Signed: ..... Date:.....

(If not the Headteacher's signature then the person signing this form is authorised to do so.)

**Copies to: - Parent / Teacher / Attendance File**

Template letter to reply to a request for holidays during term time.

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Dear \_\_\_\_\_

**Request for a holiday during term time**

Thank you for your recent correspondence requesting an absence from school during term-time for \_\_\_\_\_.

We appreciate your letter explaining the reasons for taking this holiday during term time but unfortunately as this absence is not being requested due to exceptional circumstances it will need to be recorded as an unauthorised absence in our attendance records.

Due to a directive from our Authority and in-line with government regulations regarding 'holidays during term time,' only absences necessitated by **exceptional circumstances** can be authorised. All schools are subjected to termly scrutiny of their attendance records by Education Welfare Officers to monitor this process. Unauthorised absence codes in a child's attendance records may trigger the Local Authority to issue parents with a Fixed Penalty Notice of £60. Parents have 21 days to pay this fine before it doubles to £120. Whilst you may choose to go ahead and take your child out of school for this unauthorised holiday, I am obliged to make you aware of the process this can trigger.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require any further clarification regarding this matter.

Kind regards.

Yours sincerely

Mrs V. Carr  
Headteacher

(our ref: Attendance/absence during term-time.)

## Codes used in registers

## ATTENDANCE CODES

CODE	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
I	Present (AM)	Present
\	Present (PM)	Present
B	Educated off site (NOT Dual registration)	Approved Education Activity
C	Other Authorised Circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)	Authorised absence
D	Dual registration (i.e. pupil attending other establishment)	Approved Education Activity
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised absence
F	Extended family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
G	Family holiday (NOT agreed or days in excess of agreement)	Unauthorised absence
H	Family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
I	Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments)	Authorised absence
J	Interview	Approved Education Activity
L	Late (before registers closed)	Present
M	Medical/Dental appointments	Authorised absence
N	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised absence
O	Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code/description)	Unauthorised absence
P	Approved sporting activity	Approved Education Activity
R	Religious observance	Authorised absence
S	Study leave	Authorised absence
T	Traveller absence	Authorised absence
U	Late (after registers closed)	Unauthorised absence
V	Educational visit or trip	Approved Education Activity
W	Work experience	Approved Education Activity
X	Non-compulsory school age absence	Not counted in possible attendances
Y	Enforced closure	Not counted in possible attendances
Z	Pupil not yet on roll (DO NOT USE)	Not counted in possible attendances
#	School closed to pupils & staff	Not counted in possible attendances