Elton Primary School & Nursery

Attendance Policy 2025-2026

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

Full Governors	Autumn 2026
Review	Autumn 2027

Cheshire West and Chester Council
Attendance & Punctuality Policy including EBSN

Introduction and Aim

Elton Primary School and Nursery recognises the importance of good attendance and the impact it has on children's progress, attainment, enjoyment of learning and relationships within school. Good attendance helps a child to realise their potential and ensure they are motivated, confident and enjoy a diverse range of curricular opportunities and experiences. Our school policy and prospectus promote good attendance, which is recognised and rewarded as an achievement. The school monitors attendance and ensures quick and early intervention if a problem is identified. We recognise that whole school preventative and proactive approaches are key to promoting children's wellbeing and attendance. A child must attend school every day that they are required to do so unless an exceptional circumstance applies.

Our policy is accessible to leaders, staff, pupils, and parents, and is published on our school website. It will be sent to Parents with any initial information when pupils join the school and reminded of it at the beginning of each school year and when it is updated. As the barriers to attendance evolve quickly, the policy should be reviewed and updated as necessary. In doing so, we will seek the views of pupils and parents. The Attendance & Punctuality Policy is based on the premise of equal opportunities for all.

1. Legislation

Regular and punctual attendance at school is a legal requirement. Regular attendance is essential to enable children to maximise their educational attainment, opportunities and further development.

- Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 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 444 (1) of the Education Act 1996 states that "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 576 Education Act 1996 - Meaning of "parent"

For the purposes of Education Law, the definition of a 'parent' and who is responsible for ensuring regular attendance to school is:

- all biological parents, whether they are married or not
- any person who, although not a biological parent, has parental responsibility for a child or young person - this could be an adoptive parent, a step-parent, guardian or other relative
- any person who, although not a biological parent and does not have parental responsibility, has care of a child or young person. This could be one parent, both parents and/or carer/s.

2. Registers

Registers provide the daily record of attendance of all pupils. They are legal documents and the register may be required in a court of law, for example as evidence in prosecutions for non-attendance in school.

'Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006' (section 6)
Schools must take the attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day, morning (a.m.) and once during the second session, afternoon (p.m.).

On each occasion they must record whether every pupil is:
- Present
- Attending an approved educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

The school should follow up any absences to:
- Ascertain the reason
- Ensure the proper safeguarding action is taken
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not; and,
- Identify the correct code to use before entering it on to the school's electronic register, or management information system as a priority and returned to the school office in a timely manner. This is used to download data to the School Census.
- Consider early identification, assessment, intervention and support processes that may need to be implemented.

The register should be marked using the codes as advised by the Department for Education (DfE) 'Working together to improve School Attendance Guidance' (for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities) Working together to improve school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024) (publishing.service.gov.uk)

3. Procedure

Children are expected to attend school regularly, unless there is good reason for absence.
There are two types of absence:
- Authorised (where the school approves a pupil absence)
- Unauthorised (where school will not approve the absence)

The school has a duty to safeguard all its pupils. If a child is absent, the parents/carers should inform the school on the **first day of absence** and each following day of absence, stating the reason.

Parents can inform school of the absence by contacting the school office on 01244 667750. If the call is between the hours of 8am and 4pm it will be answered by either Ms Jackson or Mrs Bonner. Outside these hours the call will be transferred to an answer machine where a message can be left. Office staff will check the answer machine messages throughout the day.

Mrs Banner – our clerical officer - is the member of school staff who is responsible for attendance monitoring in the office. Mrs Deakin – our learning mentor – is trained in emotionally based school non-attendance and can support families too. Both of them can be contacted through the school phone number or through the email address: admin@elton.cheshire.sch.uk.

Mr Manning – our headteacher – is the senior leader responsible for the strategic approach to attendance in school.

The school office will make contact with home when a child is absent, and the parent/carer has not notified the school of the absence. If no contact can be achieved or the reason for absence is not accepted the absence will be unauthorised.

4. What can parents/carers do to help and working in partnership with Parents/ Carers?

Let the school know straight away why your child is absent. Home/school communication is extremely important in supporting your child to achieve and feel settled in school. Try to make any dental/GP appointments outside of school time. If the children do attend an appointment during school time, they are expected to be in school before / after their appointment.

It is important that school and parents / carers work together with a shared plan and outcomes when supporting a child / young person's attendance and wellbeing. If despite persistent attempts to work with parents, there continues to be a lack of engagement, then legal procedures may be followed to secure engagement and school attendance.

As a school we recognise that building respectful relationships with families and working in collaboration is essential to ensuring the best outcomes for children / young people. We require all parents to actively support the work of the school, including promoting attendance and engagement. We are committed to ensuring that systems and processes are in place with regards to promoting attendance and would encourage parents to make contact if they have concerns about their child.

We will provide parents / carers with information about Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance (EBNA) to discuss needs and strategies to support their child, as appropriate.

5. Absence Monitoring

School robustly monitor and analyse attendance data to promptly identify and address possible concerns and allow for early interventions to support the child/family's underlying needs. This will include –

- Daily review of all absent children
- Weekly attendance code analysis for specific cohorts, classes and group monitoring – particularly for vulnerable groups
- Fortnightly review of all persistently absent children to examine whether current interventions are having the desired impact on improving attendance
- Termly Targeted Support Meetings with our Education Welfare Officer (EWO) to discuss possible strategies to address individual children who are persistently or severely absent.

6. Early Identification and Intervention: assess, plan, do and review

Every pupil has a right to a full-time education and Elton Primary School and Nursery sets high attendance expectations for all pupils. Elton Primary School and Nursery will consider the individual needs of pupils and their families who have specific barriers to attendance and will consider our obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

For any child who is absent from school it is essential to fully understand the reasons for this so that targeted, evidence-based interventions and support can be put into place. All staff have a part to play in promoting attendance. We recognise the importance of ensuring that key members of staff from across the school, including class teachers, attendance, pastoral and SEND staff work in collaboration to consider and identify the holistic needs of the child and to overcome barriers to attendance. In accordance with the principles of early intervention, a graduated approach of assess, plan, do and review will be followed utilising a range of school-based resources, evidence-based interventions and seeking advice and support from external services at an appropriate stage, when needed.

Appropriate assessments will be important to help understand the underlying reasons that may be contributing to attendance difficulties. This may be an assessment that focuses on the individual child's needs such as SEND assessments and wellbeing assessments or may include the holistic needs of the family, such as a TAF assessment. Assessments will include the views of the child as well as parents/carers, and identify strengths (what is working well) and needs (what is working less well).

Assessments undertaken may identify that a child is experiencing underlying emotional based needs that are contributing to non-attendance. Cheshire West and Chester Council has developed guidance for schools - Emotionally Based School Non-attendance: Good practice guidance for schools. This is a whole school framework with a graduated approach to support the early identification and intervention of children who may struggle to cope in school/attend school. In our school, Mrs Deakin is the member of staff who is trained in EBNA approaches.

Information from assessments will inform a SMART action plan with focussed targets developed in partnership with families, and other services as appropriate. For example, Early Help and Prevention and Social Care may have a part to play in the delivery of support and intervention to promote engagement and attendance. SMART plans should be personalised to effectively meet a child's needs and improve attendance and wellbeing outcomes.

Regular reviews of support and attendance plans are essential to monitor the impact of interventions and to adjust these accordingly. If, despite targeted support and intervention, attendance and wellbeing concerns persist, we may seek further advice and support from external services including mental health services, specialist teaching and education services.

7. Medical Absence

Absence due to illness should be reported to the school by phone on the first day of absence and any subsequent days. School will contact parents during the first day if no satisfactory reason for absence has been received. The school will ask about the child's symptoms in order to record their absence accurately.

In the majority of cases, a parent's notification that their child is ill can be accepted without question or concern. Schools should not routinely request that parents provide medical evidence to support illness. Schools are advised not to request medical evidence unnecessarily as it places additional pressure on health professionals.

Only where the school has a **genuine and reasonable doubt about the authenticity** of the illness should medical evidence be requested to support the absence. In instances of **long-term or repeated absences for the same reason**, however, seeking medical evidence may be appropriate to assist in assessing whether the child requires additional support to help them to attend more regularly, and whether the illness is likely to prevent the child from attending for extended periods. If a parent proactively seeks out a note from a GP, it does not imply a need for absence unless this is explicit in their letter.

If a medical absence is likely to be ongoing or long term, then we will offer support in accordance with the school's policies and statutory guidance relating to Children with health needs. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/supporting-pupils-at-school-with-medical-conditions--3. As a school we need to plan how children can access Education and how and when the child will

return to school. In accordance with the Equality Act 2010 the school must also demonstrate that reasonable adjustments are made to meet child's Educational Needs.

For children who have a medical condition and cannot attend school, the school will refer to the Cheshire West and Chester Council's Medical Needs Team.
https://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/documents/education-and-learning/medical-needs-service/medical-needs-policy-latest.pdf

Their policy states that referrals must come directly from the child's school and must be supported by medical evidence from one of the following health professionals:

- consultant paediatrician or adolescent psychiatrist
- consultant child psychiatrist
- hospital consultant

Supporting evidence from a General Practitioner alone cannot be accepted.

As from 19th August 2024 schools must make a sickness return to the Local Authority and provide the full name and address of all pupils who have been recorded with the code I (Illness) and who the school has reasonable grounds to believe they will miss 15 days consecutively or cumulatively because of sickness. This is to help the school and Local Authority to agree any provisions needed to ensure continuity of education of pupils who cannot attend because of health needs, in line with the statutory guidance on Education for Children with health needs:
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/education-for-children-with-health-needs-who-cannot-attend-school

8. Lateness and Punctuality

At Elton Primary School and Nursery we will apply a robust day to day process to track and follow up on absence and poor punctuality. We will ensure registers are completed accurately and on time, twice per day, in accordance with the timings set out below. This will indicate which pupils are absent from or are late for school.

- Our gates and classroom doors open at 8.30am
- We expect all pupils to be in their classroom by 8.45am ready for registration.
- Registers are open for marking at 8.45am. If your child is in class at this time, they will be marked as present.
- Registers close at 9.15am. If your child arrives at school after 8.45am but before 9.15am, they will be marked as late and will receive the **L code**.
- Our gates and classroom doors will close at 8.45am which means your child will need to enter the school by the main entrance and the parent will need to sign them in.
- If your child arrives at school after the registers have closed at 9.15am, they will be marked as late and will receive the **U code**. This is an unauthorised absence for that session.
- Afternoon registers will be taken 1pm.
- Afternoon register will close at 1.10pm.

In accordance with the 'Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006', if your child arrives after the registers close, they will receive a mark, code U, that shows them to be on site, but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that you could face the possibility of a Fixed Penalty Notice or other legal action if the problem persists.

Children who are consistently late for school are disrupting not only their own education, but also that of other children. Where persistent lateness gives cause for concern, you will be invited to a meeting to resolve the issues. If there is no improvement following this meeting, further action will be taken which may include referral to external agencies.
You may approach the school at any time for support and advice if you are having difficulty getting your child to school on time or maintaining regular attendance.

9. Unauthorised Absence and Fixed Penalty Notice

An absence may be coded as 'unauthorised' if:

i. no reason for absence has been given
ii. medical evidence is not received when requested
iii. a request for a leave of absence has been unauthorised
iv. a pupil arrives at school after registration has closed at 9:15

Parents/carers should be aware that Elton Primary School and Nursery may contact the Local Authority if a pupil has 10 or more unauthorised absent sessions (usually equivalent to 5 school days) within any rolling 10 school week period with a view to issuing a Fixed Penalty Notice or other legal action.

The first penalty notice issued to the parent for that pupil will be charged at £160 if paid within 28 days reducing to £80 if paid within 21 days. 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 notice, the second notice is charged at a flat rate of £160 if paid within 28 days. A third penalty notice must not be issued within a 3 year period. Therefore, in cases where the threshold is met for a third (or subsequent) times within those 3 years, a penalty notice cannot be issued and alternative action should be taken instead. This will often include considering prosecution, but may include other tools such as one of the other attendance legal interventions. *(see appendix 1 for CW&C Code of Conduct).*

10. Promoting and Incentivising Attendance (Rewards and Incentives)

At Elton Primary School and Nursery rewards, incentives and competitions play an important part when working to improve attendance. The most effective schools consistently promote the benefits of good attendance. Rewards and incentives should be devised with the children's and families' views at the heart. This will mean that our incentives and rewards are purposeful and meaningful. At Elton Primary School and Nursery the School Council will play an important part in this to ensure that we improve attendance in the most effective way. Schools that have good attendance recognise that it is not a discrete piece of work but rather it is an integral part of the school's ethos and culture.

Rewards and incentives include:

- **Weekly class competition** – each week the winning class is announced on the newsletter. The winning class moves their car on the whole school display. The car which has moved furthest along the track over the term wins the prize. The prize is £100 for the class to spend on a class treat – bowling, ice-creams, wet break games have all been selected in the past.
- **100% attendance certificates** and small prize each term and end of year.
- **Class jobs –** to incentivise punctuality and attendance
- **"In through the gate"** tokens that can be exchanged for a treat to incentivise punctuality.

At Elton Primary School and Nursery we understand that some pupils find it harder than others to attend school. Therefore, it is important that attendance is recognised, celebrated and held in high regard, no matter how small the improvements might be. Improved attendance or improved punctuality should be recognised and praised, not just 'perfect' attendance. Every child has the right to feel they can achieve and be successful, so any reward/incentive system must be inclusive of those with children with additional needs. It is important that pupils see the attendance incentives and competitions as a team effort and not to blame individuals. At Elton Primary School and Nursery pupils will be taught about the positive link between attendance and high achievement through assemblies and dedicated PSHE sessions.

Attendance information should be readily available for both children and parents. At Elton Primary School and Nursery we will share attendance information in the form of display boards, website, assemblies and information being sent home. Barriers affecting attendance in our school will be explored, taking both the children and parents views into account, so that every staff member is clear about how they can help to improve attendance and/or punctuality. This will be reflected in our rewards and incentives and time will be dedicated to such barriers in order to try to remove them. At Elton Primary School and Nursery we will recognise and celebrate attendance on a weekly basis allowing all families the opportunity to achieve and feel successful - a new week, a new start!

Consequences might be used alongside our rewards and incentives.

We are proud to be a Trauma Informed school, and as such, all pupils will be welcomed back to school by their teacher, TA, Mrs Deakin or Mr Manning and reasons for their lateness or absence will be explored sensitively with barriers established and the necessary support provided. At Elton Primary School and Nursery we recognise that some pupils will require their own individual reward systems.

11. Application for Exceptional Circumstances

As of 19th August 2024, the law ceases to include a leave of absence for a family holiday. A leave of absence should not be granted unless there are exceptional circumstances. Generally, a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation would not constitute an exceptional circumstance. Head Teachers are only empowered to approve a leave of absence when it is requested in advance by the parent or carer with whom the child resides and when circumstances of the requested leave are 'exceptional'.

The Head Teacher and the Governing Body will determine what constitutes an exceptional circumstance on an individual basis. If parents/carers need to request Exceptional Leave of Absence, they must complete an 'Exceptional Leave of Absence' form available from the school office. It should be noted that if any application is declined and absence occurs of 10 sessions (usually equivalent to 5 school days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10 school week period then school may apply to the Local Authority for a Fixed Penalty Notice to be issued to each parent/carer.

The following will not be deemed to be exceptional circumstances:

- Family holiday
- Availability of less expensive holiday
- Availability of holiday accommodation
- Parent/carer's working commitments
- Holiday pre-booked by another family member

A child's absence during term time seriously disrupts their continuity of learning. Not only do they miss the teaching on the days they are away but are less prepared for the lessons building on that teaching when they return to school. There is a consequent risk of under achievement, which we must seek to avoid.
The Governing Body is responsible for ensuring any attendance issues are dealt with in line with school policy.

Religious Observance
We recognise that some pupils may need to participate in days of religious observance.
Where a day of religious observance.

- falls during school time and
- has been exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil belongs

We ask that parents/carers notify Elton Primary School and Nursery in writing in advance where absence is required due to a religious observance.

11. Enforced School Closure
If Elton Primary School and Nursery was forced to close for a period of time, we have the facility to operate an online virtual school. The expectation is children will still engage with ALL activities when work is set. Procedures for online learning will be sent to parents as and when required.

12. Impact

All pupils will achieve well by developing knowledge and skills on their journey through school. Due to robust monitoring of attendance, all pupils, including vulnerable children and children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), will have fair and equitable access to school in order to achieve the best possible outcomes. Pupils will leave Elton Primary School and Nursery ready for a successful transition to secondary education.

13. Contact with Parents

Attendance below 92% is closely monitored in school. Parents/carers will be contacted about their child's attendance if it falls below 90% on or after November 1st of an academic year.

14. Key attendance statistics

- 100% - Outstanding achievement is recognised once a term. Children will be rewarded with a certificate and a prize.
- 96%-99% - Above national average attendance
- 95% - Current national average attendance
- 90%-95% - Below national average attendance
- <90% - Persistently absent - below this level then school will contact parents and offer support

Pathway of Support / intervention

- Once a child drops below 92% they are monitored carefully on our fortnightly tracker. An informal chat with parents may take place to make parents aware of this – depending on how far into the year we are and on what is the reason for the absences.
- Beginning from November, once a child falls below 90%, school will normally inform parents either verbally or through a letter. This won't be the case if we are aware of particular reasons such as a hospitalization. This communication is just to ensure parents are aware that their child is currently meeting the definition of "persistently absent".
- If attendance remains below 90% or decreases further over the next 4 weeks, school will write to parents to give them a second notification and to offer a meeting with Mr Manning, Mrs Bonner and / or Mrs Deakin so that we can discuss any potential barriers to attendance and discuss actions / support to address them.
- At this point if appropriate, school may request medical evidence to support any future authorisation of illness absences.
- If attendance still remains low with little sign of improvement, then a further meeting may be scheduled and a parental contract may be created. This will cover expectations from school and home on how we can address any issues that are acting as a barrier to attendance. The contract will run for 6 weeks.
- If following the 6 week period of the parental contract, attendance hasn't improved, or during the 6 week it becomes clear no improvement is happening, then school will request that the Local Authority Education Welfare Officer starts a "Notice to Improve" monitoring period which can result in a fixed penalty notice if no improvement occurs.

Appendix 1

Cheshire West & Chester

Code of Conduct for Education Fixed Penalty Notice (Unauthorised Leave of Absence & Irregular Attendance)

1. A Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) can only be issued in cases of unauthorised absence.

2. The first penalty notice issued to the parent for that pupil will be charged at £160 if paid within 28 days reducing to £80 if paid within 21 days.

3. 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 notice, the second notice is charged at a flat rate of £160 if paid within 28 days.

4. A third penalty notice must not be issued within a 3 year period. Therefore, in cases where the threshold is met for a third (or subsequent) times within those 3 years, a penalty notice cannot be issued and alternative action should be taken instead. This will often include considering prosecution, but may include other tools such as one of the other attendance legal interventions.

5. A FPN may be issued per parent per child.

6. Penalty Notices may be considered appropriate if:

- At least 10 sessions (usually equivalent to 5 school days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10 school week period. The 10 school week period may span different terms or school years (e.g. 2 sessions of unauthorised absence in the Summer Term and a further 8 within the Autumn Term).
- For poorly attending learners, at least 10 sessions (five school days) lost due to unauthorised absence during a school term. These do not need to be consecutive.
- For poorly attending learners, persistent late arrive at school in a term. Persistent means at least 10 sessions of late arrival.
- The presence of an excluded child in a public place in the child's first five days of exclusion *(N.B. points 2 to 4 do not apply where a FPN is issued for an excluded pupil in a public place.)*

7. The school must notify parents of the Attendance Policy and clearly state that parents may receive an FPN for an unauthorised leave of absence relating to holiday in term time.

8. Schools and the Education Welfare Services will take into account any exceptional circumstances when determining whether to issue a FPN.

Appendix 2

What does 'percentage attendance' mean?

Parents/carers should be advised that from September 2015 the Government have categorised those pupils who have attendance of 90% and below as 'Persistent Absence' pupils (P.A.) The table below shows the learning time lost against percentage attendance figures.

Attendance during one school year	**Equivalent Days**	**Equivalent Sessions**	**Equivalent Weeks**	**Equivalent Lessons Missed**
95%	9 Days	18 Sessions	1.4 Weeks	45 Lessons
90%	19 Days	38 Sessions	3.4 Weeks	95 Lessons
85%	29 Days	58 Sessions	5.4 Weeks	145 Lessons
80%	36 Days	72 Sessions	7.1 Weeks	180 Lessons
75%	48 Days	96 Sessions	9.3 Weeks	240 Lessons