



Elton Primary School & Nursery

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Headteacher – Mr Kevin Manning

Our ref – PARL 1258

3rd April 2025.

Dear Parents and Carers

The sun has arrived just in time for the children to enjoy their Easter break. The Easter holiday is an unusual one this year because of the late date of Easter Sunday. It does mean that the children won't return until Wednesday 23rd April. It also means that they will only be in school for 22 days before the Whit holiday but then have 38 school days for the final half term. The length of the half-terms never make much sense but they are beyond our control as we don't get to set our own holiday times!

I have had the pleasure of showing some new visitors around school recently and once again every single one of them has been struck by how well-mannered, well-behaved and hard working all the children are. We couldn't be prouder of them. I have also had the opportunity to observe reading lessons in every class over the last fortnight and I have been super impressed with the children's knowledge, enthusiasm and application to their work. It is clear to see that the children are reading regularly both at home and in school, which sets them up for success across the whole of the curriculum!

Speaking of people visiting our school, it was lovely to see so many parents attend the parents evening sessions last week. As ever, these strong links between home and school are vital for ensuring every child in our school reaches their full potential.

Celebrating our Creative Children

This term has been a particularly successful one for our children as they have shown off all their creative skills. We started the term with our fantastic choir representing the school so well at Young Voices in Manchester. A lot of hard work from the children and Miss Halligan and Mrs Hodgson all paid off with a super performance and an enjoyable evening for all!

This was then followed with our amazing Yr3 class winning the local interschool dance tournament. They had to perform in front of a large audience at the Civic Hall and were up against 9 other local schools! Their amazing dance based on "Funny Bones" earned them first place! Well done to everyone involved!

The term has ended with us finding out this week that we have been awarded the "Artsmark Silver Award" in recognition of all the artistic opportunities that the children receive and with how superbly well they demonstrate their artistic skills. I couldn't be prouder of all the children – and a big thank you to Miss Curry who has organised so many artistic events over the last 2 years to help us gain the award!



SATS

Next half-term may be the shortest half-term of the year but it also includes the SATS tests for Year 6. The tests are sat by all Year 6 children across England at the same time. They run from Monday 12th May to Thursday 15th May. For more information on SATS please visit:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/key-stage-2-national-curriculum-tests-and-results-information-for-parents/2025-key-stage-2-national-curriculum-tests-information-for-parents>

Free School Meals + Residential Costs

This week we have been handing out £30 vouchers to all our children who are eligible for free school meals (FSM) to cover the costs of dinners over the fortnight holiday. This is all funded by the Local Authority. Did you know that as well as being able to have free school meals and vouchers, if you are entitled to FSM then you are also entitled to a much-reduced cost for any school residential! Next year we will have 5 year groups who will have the option to attend a residential. If you think you may be eligible for FSM and so a reduced cost for residential, then please visit the following website for more information and the link to the online application process:

<https://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/residents/education-and-learning/free-school-meals>

Dinner Money

Speaking of dinners, can I just request that any owed dinner money is paid to school as soon as possible. School doesn't provide children's meals directly. We use a catering company supplied by Edsential. So money owed is money owed to Edsential – not to school. If dinners are unpaid then school has to use money that is meant for the children's education to settle the bills – and school budgets are really tight at the moment! As we have reached the end of the financial year, we are trying to collect all owed money as soon as possible so we can close the financial books for 2024/25. If you have any difficulty with paying debts of any sort, please do contact school so that we can work together to find a solution.

Special Needs Co-ordinator (SENDCo)

As you probably know, our wonderful SENDCo Mrs Higginson will be taking a break from Elton Primary School for a while starting from Easter as she looks forward to some quality time with her new arrival! During her maternity leave, Mrs Harland will become our SENDCo and so will take charge of all areas related to special needs.

I have already informed Yr3 and Yr5 parents that Mrs Higginson's teaching commitment will be taken over by Mrs Harland and Miss Curry temporarily increasing the number of days they work with us.

Attendance – lates, holidays and illnesses

Attendance continues to be a hot topic of conversation for schools nationally and some parents have asked for clarification recently so I thought I'd just recap key points here. Remember Mrs Deakin, Mrs Henderson and I are all here to support you with any attendance difficulties you have – do speak to us on the playground or phone school if there's any way we can help.

LATES – The school takes the register at 8:45am and at 1:00pm. If a child is not in their classroom at those times, then they are recorded as late. We do try to lock gates at 8:45 but this isn't always possible as we'd often be trapping parents in school for the day!

If a child arrives after 9:15 then they are classed as having been absent for the whole morning session and will receive an **unauthorised absence** for that morning session.



Artsmark
Silver Award
Awarded by Arts
Council England

HOLIDAYS – School is not allowed to authorise an absence for a holiday under any circumstance any more. A holiday must be coded as an **unauthorised absence**.

If a child has 10 sessions over 10 school weeks in which they have been absent and the absence hasn't been authorised they can face a fine (each day has two sessions – 8:45 and 1:00 registration times). The government rules state that if the 10 unauthorised absences have been due to a holiday then this must result in a school fining the parents.

So for example, if a child took 2 days holiday this week and 3 days holiday any time within the next 10 school weeks (which doesn't include school holiday weeks) then school HAS to issue a fixed penalty notice (FPN) of £160 per parent per child. So, a family of two parents with 2 children would face a fine of £640. This would be reduced to £320 if paid in 3 weeks, but only if it was the first offence.

Please note the school doesn't get the money! Our duty is to report attendance to the Local Authority who then issue and collect FPNs.

ILLNESSES – An illness is classed as an **authorised** absence so would never lead to a fine. However, if a parent doesn't phone in to explain the absence, **then it remains unauthorised** and so can lead to fines. This is why it is essential that parents contact school to tell us why a child is absent. If a child has 15 days or more of illness in one school year then school has to notify the Local Authority (LA). This is because the LA has a statutory duty to support children who have additional medical needs. The government use 15 illness days as the indicator that a child may have additional medical needs. If, however, a child was only off for reasons like chickenpox etc. then the LA would not need to offer any further support.

The 15 days includes all days in the academic year – so it could, for example, be a child having 15 separate days off over the year or a block of 3 weeks absence following an operation. The rule has been brought in to just ensure the LA can meet its statutory duty of offering support when needed. We have started to notify the Local Authority about some of our children meeting this threshold. I will stress again that illnesses are **authorised** and so would never lead to a fine. What can happen at times is that the school is advised to seek medical evidence if illness absences become very frequent.

As a Local Authority Maintained School, we follow the LA's attendance policy which can be found on our website at https://www.elton.cheshire.sch.uk/serve_file/28303232.

Sorry for the large attendance section again but it is the area that I get asked about the most from parents.

Wraparound Provision

Just a quick reminder that school does host "Wraparound Provision" on our site each day from 7:30-8:30 and 3:15-6:00. The provision is run by a separate organisation called "LBC Kids Elton" who are OFSTED registered. Miss Price is the best person to speak to as she is connected to both school and LBC Kids. You can also collect leaflets, registration forms and price lists from the school office.

That just leaves me to wish everyone a great Easter break and remind you all that school closes at the normal time of 3:15 this Friday and then re-opens on Wednesday 23rd April.

Yours sincerely



Mr K Manning
Headteacher



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