



Elton Primary School & Nursery

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Headteacher – Mr Kevin Manning

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OUR REF: PARL 0973

Dear Parents

I'm just writing to discuss attendance with you today. Following the pandemic, attendance has become a big issue again in schools and the government is quite rightly making it a key priority. Attendance is viewed as essential both as an educational issue and as a safeguarding issue.

As you will know, attendance is a key priority for our school because it was identified during our last OFSTED inspection as a target to address. Ofsted's target for our school states:

“Attendance has been below average and persistent absence has been higher than average for a period of time. Leaders have identified specific factors that lead to low attendance of particular groups of pupils. Staff are working with those families and with external agencies to improve attendance. However, this has not led to sufficient improvement in attendance across the school. There is now a need to review and renew the approaches to tackling absence and persistent absence, to ensure that attendance is at least in line with national averages.”

Because of our OFSTED target and the new national focus on attendance, I thought it would be useful to detail what the expectations for attendance are; and what school procedures are for dealing with absences.

Expectations

“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.”

- The average attendance for schools in England is 96% across a whole school year. Obviously with the need to isolate for a minimum of 5 days if a child tests positive this has dropped slightly recently.
- Any attendance below 90% is classed as persistently absent. Government and OFSTED collect termly records about persistently absent children from all schools.

Procedures

Each day at 9am the teachers all take an electronic register. This information is then accessed immediately via the school office. As part of safeguarding regulations, school will then try to contact



any family that hasn't already contacted us already to explain their child's absence. It is important that school is kept up to date with any ongoing illness absences.

Following these calls, school then codes the children's absences. If no contact with families has been possible then the absence will be coded as unauthorised. These codes are shared with our local Education Welfare Office (EWO) during the year when cases will be discussed. Each day school also informs the Department for Education of all Covid related absences.

Actions

Our school is keen to support all of our families to help our children attend as fully as impossible. Mr Manning and Miss Jackson are in charge of attendance and are always happy to schedule meetings to discuss attendance issues. Mrs Deakin – our school learning mentor – is trained in supporting emotional based absences and is always available for chats on the yard at the start and end of days.

We have also started to celebrate attendance with our weekly class attendance trophy.

On a daily basis, school monitors the children who are absent and what their current attendance levels are. The first step to address any attendance issue is an informal discussion (verbal, letter or email) to just identify the attendance issue and to find out if there is anything school can do to help. If attendance continues to be an issue then a formal meeting will be held to seek solutions. Involvement with the County EWO and possibly other support agencies will start at this point.

Fixed Penalty Notices

There are several attendance issues that can lead to a fine – although it is in everyone's interest to prevent the situation getting to this level.

1. If a child is late 10 or more times during a school term.
2. If a child takes a holiday during the school year for 10 consecutive sessions (5 days).
3. If a child has 10 sessions (5 days) of unauthorised absences at any point during a term (doesn't have to be consecutive).

The 3rd example here shows the importance of parents contacting school to explain the absence so that it isn't recorded as unauthorised. If a child has had many illnesses during a year then school will be advised by the EWO to seek medical evidence before authorising further absences – school will always inform parents of this in advance of it taking place. The unauthorised absences would first lead to a monitoring period being put in place by the EWO for several weeks before any fine was processed.

A headteacher does have some power to allow exceptional absences however these are very limited and otherwise national legislation governs the actions of the school. Some examples of exceptional circumstances are:

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.



Authorised absences for funerals or weddings are expected to be for 1 day – although a day's travel before and after can be granted if the journey is a long one.

I hope this rather long letter helps to explain the school's procedures. Should you wish to have a copy of your child's current attendance then please contact the school office; otherwise one will be shared with you during parent's evening in March.

Since becoming Head I've always tried to work closely with families to support where possible and I look forward to that continuing with all issues - including attendance.

Yours truly

Mr Kevin Manning
Head teacher

