Ely Schools Partnership - Attendance Matters

As an Ely School’s partnership we continue to focus our attention on attendance. We are keen to ensure that we promote the highest attendance possible for all our young people as this is a fundamental life skill that will ensure young people’s future success. Not only is it vital that our young people establish the very best habits and routines to ensure their success as future employees but there is also very clear national data that clearly shows the impact that poor attendance has on young people achieving the best possible outcomes and educational achievements. In short, if young people are not at school, we cannot teach them and this will affect their academic achievement at all levels.

As a result of this all the schools in the partnership continue to take a very firm and consistent view when parents seek permission for an absence from school for their child due to circumstances other than genuine illness. All parents can expect that all requests from parents seeking permission for leave of absence for their child will be refused and therefore unauthorised. As you will be aware permission may be sought where there are exceptional circumstances such as attending the funeral of a close family relative.

Ely Schools Partnership

Jane Dooley  Executive Principal  Downham Feoffees Primary  
Richard Spencer  CMAT Principal  Ely College  
Liz Bassett  Head teacher  Ely St John’s Primary School  
Rebecca Ireland-Curtis  DEMAT Principal  Ely St Mary’s CoE Junior School  
John Cattermole  Head teacher  Littleport Community Primary School  
Deborah Hannaford  Principal  Millfield Primary School  
Annette Blewett  Head teacher  Spring Meadow Infant & Nursery School  
Paul Baddeley  Head teacher  The Lantern Community Primary School  
Bryony Surtees  Executive  Isle of Ely Primary School  
Head teacher

NB
As a Special School Highfield has a separate policy developed to meet the special needs of the pupils and families of their school.
Simon Bainbridge  Executive Head teacher  Highfield Ely & Littleport Special Schools

The following policy has been compiled and agreed on by all the schools in the Ely Schools Partnership.
ATTENDANCE POLICY

This school is a member of the Ely Schools Partnership (ESP) and our school policies reflect the ESP vision of working in collaboration to facilitate participation and learning for all. Our aim is to provide a consistent approach to all aspects of learning whilst recognising the diversity of needs of the families within our community.

1. **Statement of Intent**

1.1 The school aims to work together with Parents/Carers to ensure that all children registered at the school attend both every day and punctually.

2. **Parents/Carers’ Responsibilities**

2.1 As parents/carers it is your legal responsibility, as stated under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, to ensure that your child attends the school at which he/she is registered regularly and punctually.

2.2 Parents/Carers should ensure that if their child is to be absent from school for any unavoidable reasons such as sickness, they should telephone the school as soon as possible, but by 9:15am, on each day of the absence.

2.3 Parents/Carers should ensure that their child arrives at school in time for the start of registration (9.00am). If a child is late, please sign them in at the school office. Registers close at 9.30am and parents need to sign in to safeguard their child. If a child arrives after the register is closed they will be marked as ‘U’ rather than ‘L’. U is an unauthorised absence.

Children arriving themselves, if late, must also sign in at the office. The parent maybe informed to check whether they are aware of the lateness.

Lateness is monitored and may be recorded as unauthorised if too frequent.

2.4 We are keen to ensure that we promote the highest attendance possible for all our young people as this is a fundamental life skill that will ensure young people’s future success. Not only is it vital that our young people establish the very best habits and routines to ensure their success as future employees but there is also very clear national data that clearly shows the impact that poor attendance has on young people achieving the best possible outcomes and educational achievements. In short, if children are not at school we cannot teach them and this will affect their academic achievement at all levels.

As a result of this we are taking a very firm and consistent view when parents seek permission for an absence from school for their child due to circumstances other than genuine illness. All parents can expect that all requests from parents seeking permission for leave of absence for their child will be refused and therefore unauthorised. Permission may be sought where there are exceptional circumstances such as attending the funeral of a close family relative.
3. **School Responsibilities**

3.1 The school will record and monitor attendance in accordance both with the statutory requirements and with the principle that regular, uninterrupted attendance is vital to a child’s educational progress.

3.2 Registers will be called twice daily at 9.00am and 1.00pm (1.30pm for KS2). Registers will close at 9am and at 1.15pm. Any child arriving after the closing of the register will be recorded as ‘late’ for that session.

3.3 Teachers will complete registers in accordance with the guidance contained in the register. Registers are reviewed with the EWO (Education Welfare Officer), whose responsibility is attendance, at regular intervals.

3.4 Should a class teacher have particular concerns about an individual child’s attendance or punctuality, *their* concerns should be brought to the Headteacher.

3.5 If a child is absent the office staff will enter the appropriate code in the register. If no explanation has been received by 9:15am from the child’s Parents/Carers then, on safeguarding grounds, the school will endeavour to make contact with the parent (initially by telephone), after which an appropriate judgement regarding authorisation will be made. If the parent cannot be contacted then the office will call all the given emergency numbers that the parent/carer has provided. If the child cannot be located, a phone call will be made to the police (or social worker if one is working with the family) for further advice. This is called ‘An Alive and Well’ procedure and is part of our safeguarding duties.

3.6 The Headteacher will regularly collect attendance data and will use this data during meetings with the school’s Education Welfare Officer (EWO). These meetings will agree on attendance thresholds and targets and will identify respective tasks and follow-up actions for both the school and the EWO. The Department for Education (DfE) deem absence of 90% or less over a given period, as persistent absenteeism. Where absence falls below acceptable levels, the school may require evidence, medical or otherwise, for any illness or other absence from school.

3.7 The school will employ a number of strategies to promote regular, punctual attendance:

- the Headteacher and class teachers will communicate regularly with parents/carers on attendance matters;
- the school will use the Local Authority Three Letter System with discretion (please refer to Appendix A);
- appropriate personal encouragement or congratulation will be offered to individual children and classes. Discretion will be used, where a child’s time off is for unavoidable medical appointments which could not be arranged outside the school day or in the holidays;
- Local Authority Parents/Carers leaflets will be sent to all new Parents/Carers.
- Clear attendance information is available here in the Attendance Policy which is available on the school website and from the school office.
3.8 Definitions

3.8.1 Authorised Absence

- An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate, acceptable reason and the school has received an appropriate notification from the parent/carer. For example, should a child be unwell and the parent/carer writes a note of explanation and/or telephones the school to explain the reason for absence. (Please notify the school on the first day of absence).
- Only the Headteacher or a properly designated member of staff may authorise any absence. Parents do not have the authority to do so. Consequently, not all absence supported by parents will be classified as authorised.

3.8.2 Unauthorised Absence

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of both the school and the parent/carer or if the child is away from school without good reason even with the support of a parent/carer (e.g., shopping or a birthday).

3.8.3 Circumstances in which Penalty Notices may be issued

A. As the Government changed the PA (Persistent Absence) threshold to 90% (in effect from Sept. 2015), the Local Authority may issue a Penalty Notice in relation to a child whose attendance at school is less than 90% over a given period. To allow time and opportunity for early intervention work with the family, attendance will be monitored by school and Local Authority before enforcement actions are considered. (Please see Appendix A)

B. Holidays taken within the school term (except in exceptional circumstances agreed by the Head teacher) will be deemed as unauthorised absence. The expectation of the Local Authority is that term time holidays should not be planned or booked as they are likely to lead to the issuing of a penalty notice. Parents/carers who take their children on unauthorised, term time holidays or whose child is persistently absent over a given period, may be issued with a penalty notice or subject to court proceedings for failing to ensure their child’s regular school attendance under section 444 of the Education Act 1996. Where unauthorised holiday takes attendance below 90% and there are other unauthorised absences a penalty fine may be issued.

Any parent who takes a child out of school for term time leave for 6 consecutive sessions (3 days) or more over a 4 week period, not authorised by the school (under exceptional circumstances rule), may receive a Penalty Notice. Therefore Penalty Notices will be issued for single event absences of at least 3 consecutive school days or more where these absences are unauthorised because they are neither exceptional nor unavoidable. The absences must be recorded with a ‘G’ code in the attendance register. Such cases will have to be supported by evidence of parents being warned about a potential Penalty Notice. In our school, the head teacher’s decision not to authorise a holiday at the bottom of the special leave of absence form, will serve as the penalty warning.
A Penalty Notice is £120 per parent, per child, reduced to £60 per parent, per child, if paid within 21 days. Non payment of the Penalty Notice within 28 days may be subject to court proceedings for failing to ensure the regular school attendance of their child(ren), which could result in a fine of up to £1,000.

- Exceptional circumstances for absence will be considered on an individual basis but the following will not meet the criteria:
  - Cheaper holidays in England or abroad
  - Visiting family/friends who have different half term holiday dates
  - Visits to see family abroad
  - Family weddings (unless immediate family and then only for the wedding itself)
  - Relatives coming to visit

4.0 This attendance policy will be reviewed in September 2018 or following any further updates from the Local Authority.
The table below applies particularly where attendance is unauthorised but does not apply to term time leave/holiday (see 3.8.3 B). Where patterns are forming, or the number of days off for illness is concerning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptor</th>
<th>Threshold attendance</th>
<th>Actual attendance</th>
<th>Whole days absent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>190 days</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>99%</td>
<td>188 days</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>186 days</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>184 days</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>182.5 days</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>180.5 days</td>
<td>9.5 (3 days in a six week period)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>94% 177 days 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Becoming unsatisfactory</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>176.7 days</td>
<td>13.3 (4 days in a six week period)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify pupils of concern and send Letter One</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>174.8 days</td>
<td>15.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify pupils of concern and send Letter Two. Meet with parents to discuss concerns and identify support – complete CAF where necessary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cause for concern</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>171 days</td>
<td>19 (6 days in a six week period)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After identifying pupils of concern and having sent Letter 3, monitor attendance over a four week period and refer to the EWO where attendance falls between 89% and 86%. Possible referral for Penalty Notice.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>169 days</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>167 days</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>165 days</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refer to the EWO when attendance falls below 90% and the previous six weeks’ attendance is recorded as mostly unauthorised.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serious cause for concern</td>
<td>85% or lower</td>
<td>161.5 days</td>
<td>28.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Requirement to inform the EWO 89% or below providing majority of absences are unauthorised