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Elsworth CE (A) Primary School **Attendance Policy**

1 Introduction

Elsworth C.E. (A) Primary School aims to work in partnership with parents and carers to maximise attendance rates in order to ensure that all of our children are able to take the fullest advantage of the learning experiences available to them.

We expect all children on roll to attend every day, when the school is in session, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so and there are no exceptional circumstances. We do all we can to encourage the children to attend, and to put in place appropriate procedures. The most important factor in promoting good attendance is the development of positive attitudes towards school. To this end we strive to make each and every school day a happy and rewarding experience for all children. We will also make the best provision we can for those children who, for whatever reason, are prevented from coming to school.

Statutory Framework

Under *The Education Act 1996*, parents and carers are legally responsible for ensuring their child attends regularly and punctually at the school where he/she is a registered pupil.

The school is obliged by law to differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence. A letter or telephone message from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence. Only if the school is satisfied as to the validity of the explanation offered by the letter/message will the absence be authorised, (see below).

Under the *Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006* the governing body is responsible for making sure the school keeps an attendance register that records which pupils are present at the start of both the morning and the afternoon sessions of the school day. This register will also indicate the reason for an absence and whether it was authorised or unauthorised.

2 Authorised and Unauthorised absence

2.1 Authorised absence

An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer; for example if a child has been unwell and the parent contacts the school to explain the absence. Only the school can authorise an absence. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised.

Department for Education (DfE) guidance, October 2014, states, "*Head teachers should not grant leave of absence unless there are **exceptional circumstances**. The application must be made in advance and the head teacher must be satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances based on the individual facts and circumstances of the case which warrant the leave. Where a leave of absence is granted, the head teacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the head teacher's discretion.*"

There are national registration codes (appendix 1) used by schools when absence can be authorised. Leave of absence can be authorised for the following reasons:

- a. a child's illness;
- b. a child's medical or dental appointment (which could not be made out of school hours);
- c. days of religious observance;
- d. participation in a supervised sporting activity;
- e. Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence for occupational purposes.

Other exceptional circumstances, warranting authorised leave of absence, have been agreed by the head teachers of Swavesey Village College feeder schools to include:

- f. the day of a family wedding or funeral;
- g. compassionate leave due to family circumstances;
- h. a parent / carer's restricted leave outside of school holidays;
- i. participation in a supervised activity/performance important to a child's specific high ability;
- j. visits to another school where she/he will eventually attend.

Proofs of the above may be asked to be seen. For example, a wedding invite, doctor's letter, medical or dental appointment card, letter from employer or work-schedule.

2.2 Unauthorised absence

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is/or has been absent without good reason, as defined and agreed by the school, taking into account the list in 2.1 above.

These absences will affect the child's overall attendance record which is monitored by the school's Education Welfare Officer (EWO) and remains on the child's school file.

3 Requests for exceptional leave of absence

The *Request for Exceptional Absence* form is available on the school website or from the school office. This should be completed by the parent or carer and returned to the school office at least one week before the first day of requested absence.

Requests for exceptional leave will always be looked at on an individual basis and a decision will be made based on whether it is considered to be exceptional. The head teacher's decision regarding authorisation will be returned in writing to the parent or carer as soon as possible. Taking additional leave than that which has been agreed will be marked as unauthorised, unless later agreed.

4 Registration & Lateness

School starts at 8.55am when the whistle is blown on the playground. Children are registered in the classroom by 9.10am. After which time, registration closes. Class teachers electronically mark children as either present or absent and office staff then enter the appropriate code relating to their reason for absence.

Children who arrive after 9.10am enter school via the main office and are recorded as Late (L) on the register. Children who arrive in school after 9.15am are recorded as Late (U) on the electronic register. If a child is persistently late the head teacher will contact the parents/carers. If this does not soon improve the EWO may be involved.

5 What happens when a child is absent

At 9.30am each morning, office staff check class registers and begin contacting parents/carers of any child who is absent for unknown reasons. If no contact is made with the parent/carer and there are concerns about the child's well-being, a home visit may be made or contact made with outside agencies.

6 Repeated absences

The head teacher monitors attendance at least every half-term. The Education Welfare Officer will visit the head teacher every term to discuss any pupil whose attendance is causing concern and to discuss appropriate intervention. The school has adopted a three letter system:

If a child has a significant number of absences (85% or below attendance over a half-term), the parent(s) or carer(s) will be invited to meet with the head teacher. Depending on the outcome of this meeting, they may be given a **Letter 1**, accompanied by the Education Welfare 'School Attendance' Leaflet and a copy of the child's attendance record. The letter reminds parents/carers about the importance of regular school attendance. The letter also points out that regular attendance is a legal requirement. This is recorded in the record of letters sent file. Should the child's attendance improve but the improvement fail to be sustained, a further copy of the letter may be sent at a later date. From this point on, a greater level of evidence may be requested from parents/carers in order for any future absences to be authorised; e.g. a letter from a doctor each time the child is reported ill.

If attendance does not improve a **Letter 2** is sent to the parent(s)/carer(s), again with the Education Welfare 'School Attendance' Leaflet and a copy of the child's attendance record. This letter is copied to the Education Welfare Officer and is recorded in the record of letters sent file.

If there is no significant improvement in attendance and no satisfactory explanation for the absences, parents/carers are informed by a **Letter 3** that their child is now at risk at becoming a persistent absentee pupil. They will also be referred to the Education Welfare Officer.

7 Penalty Notices for Non School Attendance

Repeated or prolonged unauthorised absence may result in the issuing of a Penalty Notice, in line with appendix 2 below and the *CCC Penalty Notices for Non school Attendance Code of Conduct* (see school website).

Appendix 1

| Key to Codes | | | |
|--------------|------------------------------------|---|---|
| / | Present (AM) | P | Approved sporting activity |
| \ | Present (PM) | R | Religious observance |
| B | Educated off site (not Dual reg.) | S | Study leave |
| C | Other authorised circumstances | T | Traveller absence |
| D | Dual registration | U | Late (after registers closed) |
| E | Excluded | V | Educational visit or trip |
| G | Family holiday (not agreed) | W | Work experience |
| H | Family Holiday (agreed) | # | Planned whole or partial school closure |
| I | Illness | Y | Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances |
| J | Interview | X | Non-compulsory school age absence |
| L | Late (before registers closed) | Z | Pupil not on roll |
| M | Medical/Dental appointments | - | All should attend / No mark recorded |
| N | No reason yet provided for absence | | |
| O | Unauthorised Abs | | |

Appendix 2

Process for dealing with requests for exceptional absence

