



## Ely St Mary's C of E Junior School

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*(Absence, Dinners, Uniform, Clubs, Medicines, Contact Details, School Pick-up)*

Website: [www.elystmarys.org.uk](http://www.elystmarys.org.uk)

15<sup>th</sup> September 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

Below, please find information about our expectations in relation to school attendance. As the majority of our pupils will have been undertaking their learning in the home environment for a number of months due to the Coronavirus pandemic and partial school closure, now that schools have re-opened fully it is of paramount importance that pupils be in school every day so as to be able to 'catch up and keep up', and we would ask for your support with this, please.

It is nevertheless acknowledged that there will be occasions where pupils are unable to attend school because Governmental guidance requires them to self-isolate, perhaps because they themselves have Coronavirus symptoms, or because a close family member has such symptoms, and test results are awaited.

### Attendance Matters

**Regular and punctual attendance is key to our pupils' success**, and we regard this as being of the utmost importance, setting ourselves challenging attendance targets (with the expectation that all children will have 0% unauthorised absence) in relation to the attaining of which we value the support of our parents. We do, of course, appreciate that there will be the odd occasion when a pupil is unable to be present due to illness, and that there will sometimes be other circumstances which necessitate a pupil's absence. **What we would ask, however, is that parents keep us informed, and that they also monitor their children's ongoing attendance record.** We are always happy to discuss any concerns, and to offer the support of our in-school Pastoral Support Worker in appropriate circumstances.

Interestingly, whilst an overall attendance percentage of 90% might, at first glance, appear reasonable, over the course of a year this in fact equates to 4 whole weeks of missed lessons! – see the statistics in Simon's Case (attached). Indeed, **the Department for Education classifies pupils whose attendance is below 90% as persistent absentees.** Friendships can also suffer.

**If your child is unable to attend school due to illness please notify us before 9am on the day in question, and also on each subsequent day of absence**, by telephoning 01353 662163 and either leaving a message on our answer-phone, speaking to a member of the Office Team from 8.30am, or by emailing us so as to enable us readily to account for each and every pupil. It is always helpful if you can provide us with a doctor's appointment card or a copy of any prescription issued, in appropriate circumstances, so that this can be put on file so we can keep track of your child's authorised absences.

**Absences for other reasons should be requested, with as much notice as possible, using the Avoidable Absence Request Form**, which is available from either St Mary's website ([www.elystmarys.org.uk](http://www.elystmarys.org.uk)) or the School Office; **we would ask that you consider very carefully whether the absence can be avoided, and also the impact which the absence will have on your child's education, before submitting the form.** Where the circumstances necessitating an absence occur suddenly, at short notice, we would ask that you notify us on the day and that you complete and submit the form retrospectively.

Holidays taken within the school term (except in exceptional circumstances agreed by the Headteacher) will be deemed 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 child on unauthorised, term-time holidays, or whose child is persistently absent over a given period (at least 8 unauthorised sessions over an 8-week period, with all absences recorded as unauthorised, or attendance of 90% and below which is mostly**

unauthorised over a longer period), may be issued with a penalty notice or be subject to court proceedings for failing to ensure their child's regular school attendance under section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

**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.

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 result in the parent's being 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.

**Please be aware that we monitor attendance at regular intervals, in discussion with our Education Welfare Officer, and that we currently operate a 3-letter system to keep you informed about your child's absence. The first letter is to inform you that your child's attendance is decreasing and to make you aware that we are monitoring it going forward; the subsequent letters follow this up if we do not see an improvement.** Please do not be offended if you receive the initial letter from us as we are only doing our duty to keep you informed and we do recognise that often the letter is triggered by absence through illness. Parents have often asked why we can't send out personalised letters or phone instead, but we simply do not have the capacity to alter each letter or to phone everybody in person, and this approach ensures that there is a standard written record of our communication. Of course, we are more than happy to have a discussion with you if you feel it would be useful and invite either face-to-face or phone meetings for that purpose.

We look forward to working in partnership. Maximising each and every child's attendance percentage is just one way in which we can give our pupils the best possible chance of success in their learning.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Ireland-Curtis  
Headteacher



## AVOIDABLE ABSENCE IN TERM-TIME

**IMPORTANT:** Please read carefully the information below before making an absence request.

**WARNING:** If you allow your child to miss school in term time for an avoidable reason without obtaining the prior approval of the school, you may be issued with a Penalty Notice\* per parent per child, or made the subject of court proceedings under section 444 Education Act 1996.

As a parent/carer, you can demonstrate your commitment to your child's education by not allowing your child to miss school for anything other than an exceptional and unavoidable reason.

<b>THE FACTS</b>	<b>THE LAW</b>
<p>School aged pupils in maintained schools are expected to attend punctually on the 190 days that the school is open. Whilst there are a number of unavoidable reasons why a pupil might be away from school (illness, medical appointments, exclusions etc), the legislation is clear that any avoidable absence may only be authorised by a school if there are exceptional circumstances.</p> <p><b>WHAT YOU SHOULD CONSIDER</b></p> <p>Research suggests that children who are taken out of school may never catch up on the learning they have missed. This may affect test results and can be particularly harmful if the child is studying for final year examinations.</p> <p>Children who struggle with English or Mathematics may also find it even harder to cope when they return to school, while younger children may find it difficult to renew friendships with their classmates.</p> <p>If the school is unable to authorise the absence and the child is still taken out of school, this will be recorded as <b>unauthorised absence</b> and you may receive a £60* fine per parent for each child.</p>	<p>The law allows schools to consider individual requests to authorise a future avoidable absence. However before a school can authorise any such requests, it must satisfy itself that there are exceptional circumstances which justify such a decision. It is entirely the responsibility of the parent submitting the request to provide sufficient information/evidence in order to establish this fact. The request for leave must come from a parent with whom the child normally resides</p> <p>If a child then stays away from school for more than the authorised period this must be recorded as unauthorised absence and could be quoted in a prosecution for poor attendance.</p> <p>If the child is away from school for a total of four weeks or more, the school may have the option to take the child off roll subject to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006.</p> <p>In the case of unexpected extended absence, it is advisable that the parent fully informs the school as to the reasons. If a child is removed from roll, there is no guarantee that the child will regain a place at the school.</p>

<p><b>Unavoidable absence from school will be authorised if it is for the following reasons:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Genuine illness</li> <li>▪ Unavoidable medical/dental appointments (but try to make these after school if at all possible)</li> <li>▪ Days of religious observance</li> <li>▪ Seeing a parent who is on leave from the armed forces</li> <li>▪ External examinations</li> <li>▪ Attending the funeral of immediate family</li> <li>▪ When Traveller children go on the road with their parents</li> </ul>	<p><b>Other examples of absence from school that <u>will not</u> be authorised:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Family holiday, of any type</li> <li>▪ Family day trips</li> <li>▪ Any type of shopping</li> <li>▪ Looking after siblings or unwell parents</li> <li>▪ Minding the house</li> <li>▪ Birthdays</li> <li>▪ Resting after a late night</li> <li>▪ Relatives visiting or visiting relatives</li> <li>▪ Not wanting your child to take part in a visit/trip during the school day.</li> </ul>
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Please contact your child's headteacher if you wish to discuss this issue.

**The law requires parents to ensure that their children receive an efficient full time education, and every minute of every day is important. Please help them not to miss any of this valuable time.**

We hope that when you have read this leaflet you will consider that your child's education is too important to allow them to miss school for avoidable reasons.

\*Penalty Notice £60 if paid within 21 days, increasing to £120 if paid after 21 days and before 28 days.