



# The Ellis CE Primary School

## Attendance Policy

### Statement of Principles

#### Pupils:

Pupils all have the right to learn in a safe, supportive and respectful school environment.

#### Teachers:

Staff have the right to work in a safe, supportive and respectful environment that promotes professional collaboration and wellbeing.

#### Parents:

Parents and guardians have the right to engage with the school in a safe, respectful and collaborative environment that supports their child's learning and wellbeing.

### Vision and Ethos

At The Ellis C of E Primary School, all stakeholders- governors, staff and families- share the same vision for our children: to ensure they feel valued members of our Christian school community and are inspired **to be the best they can be** through our core values of High Aspiration, Love and Courage.

As a Church of England Primary School, as well as being the heart of the village of Hemingfield for nearly 200 years, our mission is to create a successful learning environment where everyone is inspired to reach their full potential and live 'life in all its fullness' (John 10:10).

At The Ellis we have high expectations for all our children and believe, wholeheartedly, that happy children learn. For this reason, we foster a warm, caring and inclusive environment and keep our children's interests at the heart of all we do. Safeguarding pupil and staff welfare is of the utmost importance to us. In keeping with this vision and ethos, at The Ellis we aim to develop a culture based on building relationships rather than a culture based on sanctions. The attendance policy is central to developing this 'relational' culture.

### The Ellis aims

- All children will learn in a safe, nurturing, inclusive environment which engages all and enables all to achieve great outcomes.
- All children are challenged, inspired, and supported as individuals to grow intellectually, personally and spiritually, and achieve their best.
- All children will experience a fun, purposeful, balanced curriculum which inspires and promotes independence, and fosters individuality by encouraging all talents and abilities.

- All children will develop skills within and beyond the curriculum, so that they have the knowledge, self-confidence and freedom to become life-long learners with an inquisitive, 'have-a go' mentality.

### **The aims of this policy**

For our pupils to maximise all learning opportunities provided and to reach their full potential, consistently good attendance is vital. As a Trust, we are committed to meeting our obligations regarding school attendance, including:

- Promoting good attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Identifying and acting promptly to address patterns of absence
- Building strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the right support in place to ensure they attend school.
- Promoting and supporting punctuality in attending school.

### **Legislation and Guidance**

This policy meets the requirements of the DfE document 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance' (May 2022) and refers to the DfE statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures (January 2015). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and responsibilities that govern school attendance:

Part 6 of The Education Act 1996. Part 3 of The Education Act 2002. Part 7 of The Education and Inspections Act 2006 The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and

2010, 2011, 2013, 2016, 2023 amendments) The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024

It also refers to:

School census guidance

Keeping Children Safe in Education Sept 2025.

Working Together to Improve School Attendance 2024

Mental Health Issues Affecting a Pupil's Attendance: Guidance for Schools (February 2023)

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

#### **Headteacher**

- Acting as Senior Attendance Champion.
- Implementing the attendance policy at the school.
- Monitoring school-level absence data and sharing this information with the local school board in the Headteacher's Termly Report.
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils.
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies.
- Issuing fixed penalty notices where necessary.
- Having an oversight of data analysis regarding attendance using Arbor.

#### **Class teachers**

- Complete registers accurately and promptly.
- Have regular discussions with pupils about the importance of regular attendance and punctuality.
- Liaise with other school staff and respond to attendance issues promptly.
- Support the Trust/whole school ethos of promoting good attendance.

### **Attendance Leads**

Mrs Walton and Mrs Edwards are the appointed attendance leads with delegated responsibilities, including:

- Development and review of the attendance policy.
- Producing and distributing attendance information for parents/carers.
- Setting and monitoring targets for improving attendance within the school, and evaluating targets with the senior leadership team.
- Supporting all school staff in their work related to attendance.
- Collating attendance data as required for senior leadership team, DfE, LA and LSB.
- Identifying individual pupils with known punctuality/attendance issues, and ensuring these pupils are monitored closely.
- Referring pupils to the DSAT EWO when attendance gives cause for concern and liaising with the EWO to develop strategies to support these pupils/families.
- Liaising with other partner agencies and services towards improving and developing strategies to raise levels of attendance.

### **The Local School Board**

- Will receive information from the Headteacher and/or EWO on attendance in the Headteacher's termly report.
- Will support the school in setting attendance targets.
- Will support the school in planning a response where attendance is a cause for concern.
- Will support the school in its efforts to raise attendance.
- May support the school by attending strategic meetings or attendance panels as appropriate.

### **Education Welfare Officer**

The Trust has its own appointed Education Welfare Officer who will:

- Work with the CEO, Head of Business and Operations, Headteachers, School Business Managers, Learning Mentors and Attendance Leads to develop and evaluate processes, communication streams and efficient ways of working to support attendance.
- Have an up-to-date knowledge of legal proceedings and support schools in relation to statutory processes, and provide advice for schools and engage with pupils, parents and families to improve pupil attendance rates.
- Arrange and carry out home visits or on-site visits, to explore and offer support to improve pupil attendance.
- Work with other staff and agencies who support pupils, such as local authorities and multi agencies, including support for Early Help assessments and TAF meetings.
- Take part in internal meetings to share information and provide guidance on Trust policy where necessary.
- Where required participate in Child Protection procedures, including making an education contribution at case conferences and multi-agency meetings.

## Statement of Expectations

### What the school expects of pupils:

- To attend school every day, unless in exceptional circumstances.
- To arrive on time, appropriately prepared for the day.
- To report to their class teacher for registration, or to the school office if late.
- To tell a member of staff if there is any problem which may prevent them from attending school.

### What our schools expects of parents/carers

- To fulfil their statutory responsibility by ensuring their children attend school regularly and on time.
- To ensure they contact the school as per reporting procedures if their child is unable to attend.
- To ensure their child arrives on time, and is well prepared for the day (equipment, homework completed, PE kit etc.)
- To contact the school (class teacher/headteacher/admin staff) in confidence whenever a problem arises that may keep their child from attending school.
- To inform the admin staff of any forthcoming appointments and, where possible, make appointments outside of the school day. Evidence of an appointment **must** be shown to the school office staff – without evidence, the absence for a full session will be logged as unauthorised. Parents collecting children early will also be asked to show evidence of the appointment.
- To take holidays in the school holiday period only; special leave in term time will only be authorised in very exceptional circumstances – see appendix for list of absence codes.

### What parents can expect of The Ellis

- The encouragement and promotion of good attendance.
- Regular, efficient and accurate recording of attendance.
- First day contact with parents when a pupil fails to attend school without providing prior notification.
- Prompt action when any problems are identified.
- Close liaison with the Trust Education Welfare Officer, LA Attendance Officers and Early Help Team to assist and support parents and pupils.
- Notification to parents/carers of their child's attendance record through annual reports sent home (drawn from Arbor)

### Attendance Procedures

#### Registration procedures

The school gates will be open from 8:35am (F2 gate 8:50am) to enable children to get to their designated area near their classrooms.

Morning registration is at 8:45am (F2 is 8:50am) each morning.

Registers close at 9:00am (F2 is 9:05am).

Afternoon registration is 12:30pm in nursery and 1.00pm in the rest of the school.

If pupils arrive after 9.00am they will be deemed to be late and will have to register their attendance with the school office. They will be given a late mark (L).

If this lateness is due to a medical appointment, a medical mark (M) will be recorded (this is recorded as an authorised absence).

### **Responding to lateness (punctuality)**

Pupils who are regularly late for school will miss out on valuable learning time. Late arrival in school can not only disrupt the individual child's learning, but also that of their peers. Our schools will take active steps to address persistent lateness.

Pupils arriving late after doors/gates close must report to the school office, where a record of their late arrival will be made with the time of arrival and reason for the lateness.

Staff will monitor lateness and note persistent offenders. Arbor registers will be annotated with the number of minutes late.

Where a pattern of repeated lateness is seen, the school will send the relevant 'Late' letter 1 to remind parents of the importance of good timekeeping.

Where the problem persists, the school can ask the DSAT EWO to speak to parents by telephone to discuss their child's lateness and try to identify causes/seek remedies to the problem.

If there is no subsequent improvement, school will send 'Late' letter 2, and parents will be invited to a meeting with the headteacher and EWO.

In the case of O codes, these will be assessed against the latest DfE guidance on absences (10 in 10 rule).

### **The school's response to unexplained absence**

Although parents are expected to contact the school if their child is to be absent due to illness or other unexpected reasons, there will be instances where this does not happen. In such cases, all schools will follow a 'first day call' procedure as outlined below:

- If no message has been received, teachers or office staff will note the absence as O at the close of registers. This can be updated depending upon outcome of first day protocols.
- Some parents will send a message via the class teacher – this should be checked in the first instance, though third-party information must be checked with the parent as per the actions below.
- Parents must be advised that the correct procedure is to ring the school office to report absence. Please do not use class dojo for this purpose.
- If no contact has been received by 9:30am, the office staff will start to ring the contacts on the pupil's file.
- Should there be no response from any of the contacts on file, office staff should consult the SLT/safeguarding leads to ascertain whether a home visit should be made. This can be by school staff or the DSAT EWO, depending on staff availability.
- The school may choose to contact their Local Authority Safeguarding Hub if in person contact cannot be made with the family and there are concerns around the safety of the child(ren). This decision would be made following careful discussion between DSLs and SLT.

### **Safeguarding**

Children may be at risk if they do not attend school regularly. Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility. Failing to attend school on a regular basis is a safeguarding matter.

As part of first day call procedures outlined, The Ellis may well make home visits to ascertain the well-being of pupils. In any instance, where a pupil has not attended and the school has not been contacted with what it deems an acceptable reason, then a home visit will take place. The school will speak to their safeguarding leads for additional advice where necessary, and where appropriate DSLs contact their Local Authority Safeguarding Hub for support.

### **The Ellis's response to attendance issues/following attendance pathways**

The school will identify and monitor pupils whose attendance gives cause for concern. The Trust will set a target for attendance, to be reviewed each academic year.

The target for the academic year 2025-26 is 96%.

#### **Pupils falling below 96% will be deemed to be of concern.**

The attendance leads in school should review the attendance certificates and make initial contact with the parent/carer to express their concerns and offer Early Help support. At this stage schools may send their first 'light touch' letter and monitor at 3–4-week intervals, sending letters 2 and 3 if there is no improvement. The Trust EWO may also contact parents at this stage for an informal discussion.

**If attendance continues to fall to below 90%**, as defined by the DfE a child will be deemed to be 'Persistently Absent' (PA). Absence at this level is likely to cause considerable damage to a child's educational prospects and the school will need parent/carer's fullest support and cooperation to address this. If not taken up already, Early Help support should be offered again. Parents will be invited to a formal attendance review panel in school with the Headteacher/Attendance Lead and Trust EWO.

- After a monitoring period of 3-4 weeks, if there is no sign of improvement the school may start the formal Local Authority attendance pathway and inform the LA Inclusion and Attendance team and beginning with letter 1.
- A support plan will be created for the family, and further professional help accessed if not already in place. Regular review meetings will be held in school to monitor progress.
- Children whose attendance continues to fall to below 50% are deemed to be Severely Absent (SA) and will need a specific targeted plan. This should be created in liaison with support from the Local Authority Inclusion and Attendance lead.
- Parents should be advised that failure to comply with the above interventions could eventually lead to the issuing of Fixed Penalty Notices, or prosecution in court. The Local Authority will contact parents regarding the issuing of fines or any other legal action.

All absences will be assessed against current DfE guidance.

*When a child receives 10 unauthorised absences in any rolling 10-week period, the school must consider the next steps. This could include unauthorised absence (O codes), unauthorised lateness (U codes), unauthorised term time leave (G codes) or a combination of these codes.*

### **Leave of absence (including holidays in term time)**

The law states that parents do not have the right to take their child out of school for term time holidays. The Trust will not authorise holidays in term time. Our schools will refer any cases of unauthorised holiday absence that meet Local Authority thresholds for the issuing of a Fixed Penalty Notice.

Under new DfE Guidance, Local Authorities will only issue two fixed penalty notices in a rolling 3 year period. Fixed penalty notices are issued per parent, per child for any leave of absence of 5 days or more.

**Offence 1** – FPN of £160 per parent/per child This FPN will be reduced to £80 per parent/per child if paid within 21 days.

**Offence 2** – FPN of £160 per parent/per child. No reduction.

**Offence 3** – LA will consider prosecution through magistrates' court.

If parents do decide to take their child out of school during term time, school should be notified by the completion of a leave of absence request form at least 20 days prior to the date of absence. Leave of absence request forms must be collected in person from the school office and not given out by class teachers.

Where a leave of absence request is deemed to be due to very exceptional circumstances, the headteacher will consult with the Trust EWO on a case-by-case basis to ascertain whether the FPN can be waived or an 'authorised absence' code used as per new coding guidance.

Families requesting leave of absence for the purposes of Religious Observance should speak to their Head of School for guidance.

*If a child is reported as ill but there is reasonable belief/evidence that the family are on holiday, the school has the right to apply for a Fixed Penalty Notice to be issued. The LA will then assess the validity of the request.*

### **Children missing from Education/Absent from Education**

Children/students who cannot be located, or their families contacted, will be considered missing from education. The LA Children Missing from Education Team will be informed and will pursue the matter in accordance with specific Local Authority procedures. If the family/ child is still deemed missing after 20 school days they may lose their school place and be removed from the school roll.

Similarly, schools will pay particular attention to those pupils whose persistent absence is impacting severely upon their education and classed as 'absent from education'.

These cases will be discussed with SLT/Safeguarding leads and Trust EWO to ensure that appropriate and robust action is taken to address concerns.

**KCSIE Sept 2025:** *Children being absent from education for prolonged periods and/or on repeat occasions can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues including neglect, child sexual and child criminal exploitation - particularly county lines. It is important the school or college's response to persistently absent pupils and children missing education supports identifying such abuse, and in the case of absent pupils, helps prevent the risk of them becoming a child missing education in the future. This includes when problems are first emerging but also where children are already known to Local Authority children's social care and need a social worker (such as a child who is a child in need or who has a child protection plan, or is a looked after child), where being absent from education may increase known safeguarding risks within the family or in the community.* These cases will be discussed with SLT/Safeguarding leads and Trust EWO to ensure that appropriate and robust action is taken to address concerns.

### **Elective Home Education**

Should, after careful consideration, a parent decides to educate their child at home, the school should ask for confirmation of this in writing. The school may then remove the child from the school roll immediately, informing Elective Home Education. The school is under no obligation to keep the child's place open

Policy Updated – February 2026

Review Date – February 2027

Appendix 1 – please see DSAT Attendance Policy