STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

Ely Schools Partnership - Attendance Matters

As an Ely Schools 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

Susan Jaques	Head of School	Downham Feoffees Primary
Richard Spencer	CMAT Principal	Ely College
Liz Bassett	Head teacher	Ely St John's Primary
Rebecca Ireland-Curtis	DEMAT Principal	Ely St Mary's CofE Junior
Adam Rivett	Head teacher	Littleport Community Primary
Deborah Hannaford	Principal Elliot Foundation	Millfield Primary
Annette Blewett	Head teacher	Spring Meadow Infant & Nursery
David Lawrence	Head teacher	The Lantern Community Primary
Bryony Surtees	Executive Head teacher Active Learning Trust	Isle of Ely Primary
Scott Gaskins	Head of School Active Learning Trust	Littleport and East Cambridgeshire Academy

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 Active Learning Trust	Highfield Ely & Highfield Littleport Special Schools

Schools who are a member of an Academy Trust will have some policies which have been established by the trust.

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 (8.45am). If a child is late, please sign them in at the school office. Registers close at 9am (and 1.15pm in the afternoon) 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 a child arrives late more than 3 times in a half term.

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. We

expect attendance at school to be 100%, unless there are exceptional or unavoidable reasons for absence.

3.2 Registers will be called twice daily at 8.45am and 1pm (1.10pm 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 safe guarding grounds, the school will endeavour to make contact with the parent (initially by text), after which an appropriate judgement regarding authorisation will be made. If parents do not answer the text by 9.45am, the school will ring home, then all the given emergency numbers that the parent/carer has provided. If the child cannot be located by 10am, the school will visit the home. 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). 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 meeting 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;
- clear attendance information will be entered in the school brochure;
- 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 (eg 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.

Any parent who takes a child out of school for term time leave for 6 consecutive sessions (3 days) not authorised by the school (under exceptional circumstances rule), will 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. It also states it on the front of the leave of absence form.**

A Penalty Notice is £120 per parent, per child, reduced to £60 per parent, per child, if paid within 21days. Non payment of the Penalty Notice within 28days 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. **(This includes both parents with parental responsibility unless either parent has written to say they do not support the holiday.)**

Exceptional circumstances for absence will be considered by the headteacher on an individual basis and against the fundamental principles of being rare, significant, unavoidable and short in duration.
Examples of situations that will not be deemed as exceptional:
- 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 **November 2019** or following any further updates from the Local Authority.

Appendix A

Ely St John's

The table below applies, particularly where attendance is unauthorised and where patterns are forming, or the number of days off for illness is concerning. It does not apply to term time leave/holiday (see 3.8.3 B).

Descriptor	Threshold attendance	Actual attendance	Whole days absent	
Excellent	100%	190 days	0	PREVENTATIVE
	99%	188 days	2	
	98%	186 days	4	
Good	97%	184 days	6	
	96%	182.5 days	7.5	
Satisfactory	95%	180.5 days	9.5 *(3 days in a six week period)*	
	94%	177 days	13	
Becoming unsatisfactory Identify pupils of concern and send letter	93%	176.7 days	13.3 *(4 days in a six week period)*	
	92%	174.8	15.2	
Identify pupils of concern – reminder or meeting	91%	172.9	17.1	
Cause for concern – 90% or below with majority unauthorised Identify pupils of concern. Meet with parents to discuss concerns and identify support – set targets. Likely target - 90% over an 8 week period (spans academic years) – a penalty notice can be issued if absence hits 4 or more days in this monitoring period.	90%	171 days	19 *(6 days in a six week period)*	PENALTY NOTICE
Serious cause for concern	85% or lower	161.5 days	28.5	Court

15 days ill – follow medical protocol.

This policy was ratified by the Full Governing Body on Thursday 29th November 2018.