

Elham Church of England Primary School

Creating lifelong learners guided by God's teaching.



Attendance Policy

September 2026

Based on the DfE document "Working Together To Improve School Attendance"
Updated 9th July 2026 (applies from 1st September 2026)

Our School Vision

At Elham, we believe that every child is a unique gift from God, with their own potential to flourish and grow. Guided by Christian faith and love, our school is a nurturing community where all are welcomed, valued, and inspired to aim high, act with compassion, and live with integrity. We instill a deep sense of **faith**, hope, and purpose, encouraging our pupils to act with **empathy** and serve others with love.

We are committed to **achievement for all**, ensuring that every child—regardless of background or starting point—is supported and challenged to thrive. We are guided by a belief in encouraging children to dream boldly and persevere with purpose. Learning is our purpose and commitment.

We are a **community**, deeply rooted in our rural location and influenced strongly by our local parish. We are here for our children and their families, and we recognise the central role we play as a part of our village.

We celebrate ambition and through a rich and inclusive curriculum, we help our children grow into confident, kind, and thoughtful individuals who make a positive difference in the world.

Our Narrative

New Living Translation John 6:5-14 Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand

5 Jesus soon saw a huge crowd of people coming to look for him. Turning to Philip, he asked, "Where can we buy bread to feed all these people?" 6 He was testing Philip, for he already knew what he was going to do.

7 Philip replied, "Even if we worked for months, we wouldn't have enough money^[a] to feed them!" 8 Then Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up. 9 "There's a young boy here with five barley loaves and two fish. But what good is that with this huge crowd?"

10 "Tell everyone to sit down," Jesus said. So they all sat down on the grassy slopes. (The men alone numbered about 5,000.) 11 Then Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks to God, and distributed them to the

people. Afterwards he did the same with the fish. And they all ate as much as they wanted. 12 After everyone was full, Jesus told his disciples, "Now gather the leftovers, so that nothing is wasted." 13 So they picked up

the pieces and filled twelve baskets with scraps left by the people who had eaten from the five barley loaves. 14 When the people saw him^[b] do this miraculous sign, they exclaimed, "Surely, he is the Prophet we have been expecting!"^[c]

Elham Church of England Primary School

Elham Church of England Primary School is a Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School catering for children between the ages of 4 and 11 years. The school prides itself on being a church school with three guiding values: faith, achievement, community and empathy. Elham aims to be a school at the centre of its community, where children are proud to attend. An example of outstanding Christian education, rooted in faith, love and empathy.

Statement of Intent

Elham Primary School is committed to both the safety and achievement of all our pupils. Regular attendance and punctuality are critical if our pupils are to be successful and benefit from the opportunities presented to them. There is a direct correlation between achievement and attendance; good attendance is a prerequisite for good learning and progress.

We recognise the central role. Good attendance is fundamental to a successful and fulfilling school experience. We actively promote 100% attendance for all our pupils, and we are in regular contact with parents and families to support them in meeting this expectation. For example, we have Parent Forums and an Open Door Policy, as well as a termly raffle for parents of children with 96% attendance or higher.

The Governors, Headteacher and Staff, in partnership with parents, have a duty to promote full attendance at Elham Primary School.

Importance of good attendance.

The importance of school attendance and improving attendance is everyone's business. The barriers to accessing education are wide and complex, both within and beyond the school gates, and are often specific to individual pupils and families. The foundation of securing good attendance is that school is a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn.

Some pupils find it harder than others to attend school, and therefore, at all stages of improving attendance, schools and partners should work with pupils and parents to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place. Securing good attendance cannot therefore be seen in isolation, and effective practices for improvement will involve close interaction with schools' efforts on curriculum, behaviour, bullying, special educational needs support, pastoral and mental health and wellbeing, and effective use of resources, including pupil premium. It cannot solely be the preserve of a single member of staff, or organisation, it must be a concerted effort across all teaching and non-teaching staff in school, the trust or governing body, the local authority, and other local partners.

The law on school attendance and the right to a full-time education

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have.

It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school. Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances, such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance by the school.

Parental Responsibility

Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their children attend school regularly and arrive on time.

Regular attendance is essential to the all-round development of the child, and they should be allowed to take full advantage of educational opportunities available to them in order to make good progress in their learning. Poor attendance and punctuality undermine their educational attainment and progress and, sometimes, put pupils at risk by encouraging anti-social behaviour. If a pupil has attendance of 90% that is equivalent to them having one day off every 2 weeks. It is important for parents/carers to know that any absence, regardless of the reason, will affect their child's ability to make progress in their learning and reach their full potential. We will be monitoring

children's attendance regularly. If a child's attendance falls below 96%, we have a duty of care to inform parents, and further action may be taken.

It is the parents' responsibility to contact the school on the first day their child is absent. **This is a safeguarding issue requirement so that all parties know that your child is safe and their whereabouts are known. Parents should update the school on each day of absence and inform the school when their child is returning.**

Pupils are expected to arrive and be ready to learn on time.

At Elham Primary School, the school gates open at 8.30am, with the school building accessible to children from 8.35am. The school gates close at 8.50am. The register is taken at 8.50am and is then closed. All pupils who arrive late must report, with their parents, to the school office, where the reason for lateness is recorded. This lateness will be monitored.

Frequent lateness or absence will be discussed with parents swiftly, either in a formal meeting or informally, and will be referred to the Education Welfare Officer (EWO).

The Role of the School Staff

At Elham Primary School, there is a whole school responsibility and approach for improving school attendance, with specific staff taking individual responsibility. Class teachers complete a register at the beginning of each morning and once during the afternoon session. **Marking the attendance registers twice daily is a legal requirement. (The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006).** Teachers mark pupils present, absent or late.

It is the responsibility of the School's Attendance Officer to ensure:

- Attendance and lateness records are up to date
- If no reason for absence has been provided, parents are contacted on the first day of absence by phone call.
- Where there has been no communication, an email is sent in the first instance to parents requesting the reason for absence.
- The appropriate attendance code is entered into the register (see updated National Attendance Codes)
- Parents and carers can contact the office during school hours for information on their child's attendance data.
- Attendance figures are shared with the DfE daily via Wonde

The senior leader who has overall responsibility for attendance procedures is Mr Magliocco, the headteacher, who can be contacted via the school office on: [01303 840325](tel:01303840325) or at: secretary@elham.kent.sch.uk

Any queries about attendance on a day-to-day basis should be dealt with through the school office.

Role and Responsibility of Kent County Council

All pupils

- Have a strategic approach to improving attendance for the whole area and make it a key focus of all frontline council services. Have a School Attendance Support Team (PIAS) that works with all schools in their area to remove area-wide barriers to attendance.
- Provide each school with a named point of contact in the School Attendance Support Team who can support with queries and advice.
- Offer opportunities for all schools in the area to share effective practice.

Pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent -

- Hold a termly conversation with every school to identify, discuss and signpost or provide access to services for pupils who are persistently or severely absent or at risk of becoming so.
- Where there are out of school barriers, provide each identified pupil and their family with access to the services they need in the first instance. If the issue persists, facilitate a voluntary early help assessment where appropriate and take an active part in the multi-agency effort with the school and other partners.
- Provide the lead practitioner where all partners agree that a local authority service is best placed to lead. Where the lead practitioner is outside of the local authority, continue to work with the school and partners.

Persistently absent pupils

- Continued support for pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent and work jointly with the school to provide formal support options, including parenting contracts and education supervision orders.
- Where safeguarding concerns exist, ensure joint working between the school, children's social care services and other statutory safeguarding partners.
- Where support is not working, being engaged with or appropriate, enforce attendance through legal intervention (including prosecution as a last resort).

Severely absent pupils

- Continued support for persistently absent pupils and all services should make this group the top priority for support. Support for cohorts of pupils with lower attendance than their peers.

- Track local attendance data to prioritise support and unblock area wide attendance barriers where they impact numerous schools. Support for pupils with medical conditions or SEND with poor attendance.
- Work closely with relevant services and partners, for example, special educational needs, educational psychologists, and mental health services, to ensure joined up support for families. Support for pupils with a social worker (VSK - Virtual School Kent)
- Regularly monitor children's attendance with a social worker in their area. Put in place personal education plans for looked-after children. Secure regular attendance of looked-after children as their corporate parent and provide advice and guidance about the importance of attendance to those services supporting pupils previously looked after.

Support for pupils with medical conditions or SEND with poor attendance

- Work closely with relevant services and partners, for example, special educational needs, educational psychologists, and mental health services, to ensure joined up support for families

Support for pupils with a social worker (VSK - Virtual School Kent)

- Regularly monitor the attendance of children with a social worker in their area. Put in place personal education plans for looked-after children. Secure regular attendance of looked-after children as their corporate parent and provide advice and guidance about the importance of attendance to those services supporting pupils previously looked after.

Role of School Governors

At Elham Primary School, Governors take an active role in attendance improvement. They do this by supporting the school to prioritise attendance, and working together with leaders to set whole school cultures. The HT updates the Governors 3 times per year to ensure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties. They regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it. An attendance monitoring visit takes place once per year.

Timeline of the Staged Approach for Managing Poor Attendance

Any child's attendance that falls to 95% or below will be identified and part of a conversation with the SLT. A letter will be sent to parents, and improvement is expected over a reasonable amount of time. If a child's attendance falls below 95%, further absences will not be authorised unless supported by medical evidence.

- Where attendance falls to 95% or below – The School's Attendance Officer will send a letter to notify parents.
- 90 - 95% attendance - school intervention letters/meeting with parents.
- Where the level of absence has not improved and there are unauthorised absences, the school will make a referral to the KCC using the Digital Front Door. If it is not clear that a referral to the Service is appropriate, the school will consult with the Local Authority School Liaison Officer for advice.

- For the cases that require intensive family support, the school may make an Early Help Notification.

*If absence is due to holiday absence, this will be managed through the Penalty Notice (PN) process.

Penalty Notice

The **PN Process** in UK education refers to the **Penalty Notice Process**. It's a legal mechanism used by schools and local authorities to address **unauthorised absences** from school — including situations where a child is taken out of school during term time without permission (e.g. for a holiday or family event like a wedding that was not authorised).

A **Penalty Notice** is a fine issued to parents when their child has **unauthorised absences** from school. It is an alternative to prosecution but can lead to more serious legal action if not paid.

Penalty Notices are typically issued when:

- A child has **unauthorised term-time leave**, such as:
 - Holidays taken without permission
 - Weddings or family events that are not approved by the headteacher
- A child has **repeated unauthorised absences** without a valid reason (e.g., persistent lateness, unexplained absences)

Each local authority has its own **Code of Conduct** that outlines how many sessions (half-days) of unauthorised absence will trigger a penalty notice, but a **common threshold** is:

◆ **10 unauthorised sessions (5 full school days)** in a 10-week period

How much is the fine?

- **£160 per parent, per child**
- This falls to **£80 per parent, per child** if paid within **21 days**
- **Failure to pay** can lead to prosecution and a fine of up to **£2,500**, a parenting order, or even imprisonment in extreme cases.

Support for all

At Elham Primary School, we will support each individual case in a way that we see fit. We will be as supportive and bespoke as possible in order to find methods and approaches that work for that individual. Access to wider support services will be

provided to remove barriers to attendance. If attendance is severe and persistent, support will be offered in conjunction with the local authority.

Children Missing Education

No child should be removed from the school roll without consultation between the Headteacher and the Inclusion and Attendance Service when appropriate. Please see the circumstances below:-

Where a child is missing from education, Local Authority guidance will be followed by completing a

Child Missing Education referral for the following circumstances:-

- If the whereabouts of the child is unknown and the school has failed to locate him/her.
- The family has notified the school that they are leaving the area, but no Common Transfer Form (pupil file) has been requested by another school.

Lateness

The register is taken at the start of each school day (8.50am). Children who arrive after their registration time and before 9.00am are marked as 'late' (Code 'L') and 9.00am onwards as 'unauthorised' (Code 'U'). Pupils arriving after 8.50am must enter school by the main entrance and report to Reception with a parent or carer, where the child's name and the reason for lateness will be recorded.

Pupils arriving after the register has closed (after 9am) will be marked as late after registration (Code 'U'), and this will count as an unauthorised absence.

Frequent lateness after the register has closed (U) will be discussed with parents and could provide grounds for prosecution or a Penalty Notice. All attendance marks are recorded through Pupil Asset, our MIS system.

Penalty Notice Proceedings for Lateness

- 10 incidents of late arrival after the registers have closed (Lateness code U) during any possible 100 school sessions lead to a Penalty Notice Warning Letter.
- The Penalty Notice Warning Letter sets out 15 school days during which no unauthorised absence (Lateness Code U) is to be recorded
- If unauthorised absence (Lateness Code U) is recorded during the 15 day period, a Penalty Notice(s) will be issued (one per parent per child)
- Where a Penalty Notice is not paid within 28 days of issue, the Local Authority will instigate court proceedings

Authorising Absence

Only the Headteacher can authorise absence using a consistent approach. The Headteacher is not obliged to accept a parent's explanation. A letter or telephone message from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence. If absences are not authorised, parents will be notified.

If no explanation is received, absences will not be unauthorised.

Absence (for example, leave for holidays) during term time **can only be approved in "exceptional circumstances"**. The following reasons are examples of absence that will not be authorised:

- Persistent nonspecific illness, e.g. poorly/unwell
- Absence of siblings if one child is ill
- Oversleeping
- Inadequate clothing/uniform
- Confusion over school dates
- Medical/dental appointments of more than half a day without very good reasons
- Child's/family birthday
- Shopping trip
- Family Holidays and/or Weddings (with some rare exceptions)

"Exceptional circumstances" will not be given to any child whose attendance is below 90%.

Persistent unauthorised absence (10% or more of the school year) or severe persistent unauthorised absence (50% or more of the school year) may result in an AS1 referral to the Local Authority School Liaison Officer for consideration of prosecution. The school will follow procedures prior to referral, and parents will be notified in writing.

When a referral is made, the child's Registration Certificate, copies of all letters sent to parents and minutes of any meetings need to be attached to the completed AS1 referral form with any other relevant information.

Local Authority Action
may include:-

- Attendance
- Improvement meeting
- Home visits
- Liaison with other agencies
- Fast track to prosecution

Pupils with long-term medical conditions or special educational needs

The school will work together with parents of pupils with long term medical conditions or special educational needs. Schools must be mindful of the barriers these pupils face and put in additional support where necessary to help them access full time education. This will be done in partnership with parents.

Penalty Notice Proceedings for Poor Attendance (Please refer to: Kent County Council Code of Conduct for issuing penalty notices for school absence 2024)

- A Penalty Notice can only be issued in cases of absence for 10 or more half day sessions (5 school days) without authorisation during any 100 possible school sessions or period of 50 days of schooling (10 week period) – these do not need to be consecutive.
- A penalty notice will be issued per parent, per child e.g. 3 siblings absent for term time leave, would result in each parent receiving 3 separate fines.
- A Penalty Notice can also be issued where an excluded child is found in a public place during school hours.
- After the appropriate request for a Penalty Notice is received, the KCC Inclusion and Attendance Service will issue a warning letter setting out 15 school days during which no unauthorised absence is to be recorded.
- If unauthorised absence is recorded during the 15 day period a Penalty Notice will be issued (one per parent per child).

Notice to improve (Please refer to: Kent County Council Code of Conduct for issuing penalty notices for school absence 2024)

A notice to improve is a final opportunity for a parent to engage in support and improve attendance before a penalty notice is issued. If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate, but offers of support have not been engaged with by the parent or have not worked, a notice to improve should usually be sent to give parents a final chance to engage. Kent schools will issue a notice to improve for parentally-condoned absence and unauthorised absence. It will not be necessary to issue a notice to improve for term time holidays or leave of absence. At the end of an unsatisfactory monitoring period, schools may request a penalty notice to be issued if this is considered the best course of action to improve attendance.

Penalty Notice Proceedings for Holidays (Please refer to: Kent County Council Code of Conduct for issuing penalty notices for school absence 2024)

Holidays will not be authorised. For unauthorised family holidays (code "G")

- A Penalty Notice will be issued in cases of absence for 10 or more half day sessions (5 school days) without authorisation during any 100 possible school sessions or period of 50 days of schooling – these do not need to be consecutive.

Exceptional circumstances:

The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, unavoidable and short. And by 'unavoidable' it implies that an event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. It is important to note that Headteachers *can* agree the absence of a child in exceptional circumstances, and this discretion can also be used to determine the length of the authorised absence.

The Headteacher may authorise absence in "exceptional circumstances" but this must be requested 6 weeks in advance and agreement to each request is at the discretion of the Headteacher, acting on behalf of the Governing Body (Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006). Each case will be judged on its merits, and the Headteacher's decision is final. Once the decision not to authorise leave is taken, it cannot be authorised retrospectively.

If the absence is not authorised and the holiday is taken anyway, the case may be referred to Kent County Council, who may issue a Penalty Notice to each parent for each child taken out of school.

Failure to pay the penalty in full by the end of the 28 day period will result in prosecution by the Local Authority.

Bereavement

We will consider each individual situation carefully to ensure that the response from the school is sensitive, accurately reflects the gravity of the situation, and involves those affected as appropriate. Where a child or their family needs time away from school, this will be considered as 'exceptional circumstances'. Headteachers *can* agree the absence of a child in exceptional circumstances, and this discretion can also be used to determine the length of the authorised absence.

Each case will be judged on its merits, and the Headteacher's decision is final. Once the decision not to authorise leave is taken, it cannot be authorised retrospectively.

Penalty Notices (Please refer to: Kent County Council Code of Conduct for issuing penalty notices for school absence 2024)

Where Penalty Notices are imposed, the regulations state that the penalty will be £160 to be paid within 28 days, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days. Penalty Notices are issued to each parent of each child. Failure to pay the penalty in full by the end of the 28 day period will result in prosecution by the Local Authority.

Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 says that parents are **guilty of an offence** of failing to secure regular attendance at school unless they can prove that the child was absent:

- with leave (the school has given permission)

- due to sickness or any unavoidable cause (the sickness or unavoidable cause must relate to the child, not the parent)
- religious observance
- failure by the Local Authority to provide transport. In law, these are the only acceptable reasons for a child being absent from school.

First Offence

The first time a Penalty Notice is issued for Term Time Leave or irregular attendance the amount will be; £160 per parent, per child, paid within 28 days and reduced to £80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days.

Second Offence (within 3 years)

The second time a Penalty Notice is issued for Term Time Leave or irregular attendance within a 3 year period, the amount will be £160 per parent, per child, paid within 28 days.

Third Offence and any further offences (within 3 years)

Fines per parent will be capped at two fines within any three-year period. Once this limit has been reached, other actions like a parenting order or prosecution will be considered. **The third time an offence is committed for Term Time Leave and irregular attendance, a Penalty Notice will not be issued, and the case will be presented straight to the Magistrates' Court.** Magistrates' fines can be up to £2500 per parent, per child. **Cases found guilty in the Magistrates' Court can show on the parent's future DBS certificate** due to 'failure to safeguard a child's education.'

Using Data to Improve Attendance

Senior Leaders meet to discuss individual pupils and their attendance. Attendance statistics are discussed, and relevant attendance reports are shared with key staff to aid discussions with families. Best practice ideas are discussed, and data is used to understand the impact of interventions.

Termly patterns of attendance are recorded and monitored, including

- Whole school and individual pupil basis
- Groups e.g. FSM, SEN, PP, CiC, GRT, EAL, Young Carers
- How we compare with national data.
- Daily statistics are shared with the DfE via Wonde

Reduced Timetables (Working together to improve school attendance DfE guidance May 2023)

All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. In very exceptional circumstances, where it is in a pupil's best interests, there may be a need for a temporary part-time timetable to meet their individual needs. Exceptional circumstances include:

- There's a specific need for a pupil - e.g. medical condition
- It's in the pupil's best interests
- It's on a temporary basis
- A family bereavement
- A pupil joining the school has significant needs, and it is being used for transition

A part-time timetable must only be in place for the shortest time necessary and not be treated as a long-term solution. Any pastoral support programme or other agreement should have a time limit by which point the pupil is expected to attend full time, either at school or alternative provision. There should also be formal arrangements in place for regularly reviewing it with the pupil and their parents. In agreeing to a part time timetable, a school has agreed to a pupil being absent from school for part of the week or day and therefore must treat absence as authorised. All applications for reduced timetables are made to KCC.

Home Visits

Through our safeguarding procedures, from the first day of absence, if we are in any way unsure about a child's absence we will carry out a home visit.

If a child has been absent for 3 days or more, we reserve the right to carry out a home visit even if the parents have continued to be in communication with us. Home visits will always be conducted by 2 members of staff.

Procedures: What you should do if your child is ill?

If your child is unable to attend school for any reason, for safeguarding purposes, **you must phone the school absence line and leave a message before 8.30am each and every day detailing the nature of the absence and why they are unable to attend.** The Headteacher will then decide whether or not to authorise the absence. Please call [01303 840325](tel:01303840325) and follow the directions to report the absence. If we have yet to hear why your child is absent, we may also action a home visit. If you do not tell the school why your child is absent, it will be recorded as an 'unauthorised' absence.

What about medical or dental appointments for your child?

We respectfully ask that all medical appointments be scheduled before or after school, or preferably during the school holidays. However, we fully accept that there will be

times when this is not possible, and as a result, we will need to see evidence of the appointment in order to authorise the absence.

Please inform the school about any medical or dental appointments you have made for your child. Please bring any letters or appointment cards relating to the absence into the school office, or alternatively, please email a copy to the school office at secretary@elham.kent.sch.uk

A full-day absence for a medical appointment is usually unnecessary. If your appointment is during the day, your child should attend school during the morning and be collected in time for the appointment. Your child must return to school after their appointment if they are fit to do so.

What should I do if I learn that my child is truanting?

If your child does not come to school and you do not know about this, or if your child leaves school during the day without permission, then he/she is truanting. An absence like this will be recorded as 'unauthorised'. You should contact the school if you think your child may be truanting. The school can work with you and your child to find out why he/she is missing school.

Attendance and Absence Codes

- / Present (am) \ Present (pm)
- L Late arrival before the register is closed
- D Dual registered at another school
- B Off-site educational Activity
- J At an interview with prospective employers, or another educational establishment
- P Participating in a supervised sporting activity
- V Educational visit or trip
- W Work experience

Absence Codes (authorised and unauthorised)

Authorised absence

- C Leave of absence granted by the school
- H Leave of absence for the purpose of a family holiday granted by the school
- E Excluded but no alternative made
- I Illness (not a medical or dental appointment)
- M Medical or dental appointment
- R Religious observance
- S Study leave
- T Traveller absence

Unauthorised absence

G Holiday not granted by the school or in excess of the period determined by the school
N Reason for absence not yet provided
O Absent without authorisation
U Arrived at school after registration closed

Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Y Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances
X Non-compulsory school age pupil not required to be in school
Z Prospective pupil not on admission register
Planned whole or partial school closure

Reasonable adjustment

Reasonable adjustments to all sections of this policy will be made for children with long-term medical conditions.

Promotion of Good Attendance

We recognise that, at the primary age, parents and carers play a large role in the attendance and punctuality of their child or children. For this reason, we do not give attendance awards to pupils, as it can make those children who do not receive awards feel guilty or unfairly treated. This would not be in keeping with our value of empathy. Instead, one of the initiatives to promote good attendance we use is a termly raffle for any parent whose child has over 96% attendance. The winner of this raffle then receives a prize and a card.

This policy was approved by the Governing Body on:

Ed Robbins **Date**
(Chair of Governors)

Joseph Magliocco **Date**
(Headteacher)

This policy will be reviewed by the Full Governing Body on an annual basis