

## Message from Mrs Ohene

Dear Parents and Carers,

Happy New Year 2025!

I do hope you all had a lovely break.

We look forward to a year of wonderful learning and education opportunities and experiences for our children. With a new year comes new hope and a chance to 'be' better. In our assemblies this week, we talked about our dreams and goals. Many of the children shared theirs:

Finley would like to learn how to cook

Lily would like to learn how to ride her bike without stabilisers

Margot wants to learn how to roller-skate

Inaaya wants to learn how to ride a bike

These are all valuable skills! The children could articulate how they would start- by taking action! With that in mind please do complete our parent survey. This term, we are working on developing our Elmtree Enrichment offer as part of our overall curriculum, and for personal development. In line with our school development plan, we would like to consider the experiences and opportunities our children need to thrive and to live out the spirit of childhood.

Click here to complete our parent survey <https://forms.office.com/e/SyAdF9N9ag>

Our survey is designed to determine which childhood experiences we want to offer children in school with the aim to gather insights from you about the types of experiences you believe are most important for your child's learning and development. The goal is to create a holistic approach to education that aligns with the needs and aspirations of our families, and to better understand what you believe is essential for your child to thrive both academically and socially. As a school we hope to develop '7 things by the time I'm 7' set of experiences/ opportunities that define childhood, supporting children to thrive and leave us with valuable skills, knowledge or memories for life! For example, we would want all children to experience baking in their time with us, or go to the park, visit a museum or even ride a bike/ trike! Give us your views.

Have a wonderful weekend- stay warm!

Mrs Ohene



*Together we reach for the stars*



BRONZE: GOOD TRAVEL PLAN 2023



## **NEWS and REMINDERS**

Please do consider your involvement in our Elmtree Family and Friends group and the support you can give, however small. This group is vital for Elmtree and the different ways in which it benefits the children. There is an AGM on 29<sup>th</sup> January at 8pm in school which you are welcome to attend. Roles can be shared to support its continuation, but we do need two-three named Trustees.

### **Home Learning**

Home learning in the early years and key stage one is non-statutory. Last term, we held a parent forum session. In your feedback, you said you wanted a more streamlined and consistent approach to home learning that is manageable for children and families. You also wanted work that children can handle mostly independently with some support from you.

From this term, we are revising our approach to home learning. We want to prioritise family time whilst also ensuring that children have regular opportunities to consolidate, reinforce or practise their learning. We want children to become more independent in their learning in their time with us, practising the most important skills. Please read the attached home learning guidance which provides valuable information about our approach. From next week, you will receive a weekly home learning and update sheet which will give you a brief update from the class teacher/ phase leader as well as activities for your child to practise, based on their learning in class from that week. On occasions there may be other activities set in line with subjects across the curriculum, for example science, history or geography. Sometimes, we may run whole school home learning activities to get involved in or send ideas for things to try at home. Home learning books can be kept at home to complete activities in when needed. There will be no need to hand any work in as activities will be for consolidation, reinforcing learning or practise only. If you have any questions or concerns, then please do get in touch via the office email.

### **Tapestry**

We will be using Tapestry slightly differently in Reception from now on. WOW moments will be shared for all children as a group whose parents have opted in, twice per half term. This is instead of doing individual WOW moments for each child twice per half term- that's 200+ entries! The revised Early Years Foundation Stage guidance wants practitioners to be able to spend their time interacting with children as opposed to behind screens taking pictures! We know this may be disappointing for some of you but please be assured that this is a good thing because your children will get more interactions with their class adults! Nursery will continue to use Tapestry in the same way we have been.

### **Punctuality**

Please be advised that if you repeatedly drop off your child too early/ collect them late then your child will be placed in our wraparound provision with Premier and you will be charged.

### **\*\*\*REVISED DATES\*\*\***

We endeavour to give you as much notice as possible for school events. On occasion, we may have to amend them.

**Monday 20th January-** January Joy Day. Children can wear their favourite colour/ mufti. They will experience a carousel of play activities throughout the day, designed to bring joy whilst also sparking their problem-solving, critical thinking and active learning skills! There will also be stay and play sessions for all classes, including Nursery. 9.05-9.45am in classes (art theme). If you have more than one child and would like to split the time, then please speak to your child's class teacher. The afternoon session for Nursery will run another stay and play session from 2.15-2.55pm.

### **Learning consultations**

Monday 17<sup>th</sup> and Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> March 3.45-6.45pm

## Autumn Term Attendance

| National | ODBST | PA   | Our school | PA    |
|----------|-------|------|------------|-------|
| All      | 96.3% | 2.9% | 93.6%      | 20.8% |
| PP       | 95.7% | 3.3% | 92.6%      | 24.1% |
| SEN K    | 93.3% | 4%   | 92%        | 33.3% |
| EHCP     | 96.%  | 2.9% | 90%        | 42.9% |

This grid shows the attendance across ODBST schools for the Autumn term. You will see that Elmtree did not meet our expected 96%. It is also very concerning that our most vulnerable children (Pupil Premium- PP and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities- SEN K, Education Health and Care Plans- EHCP) have the poorest attendance rates overall and the most significant persistent absence (PA).

It is vital that children are in school every day to give them the best chances of success in life, and to prepare them for the next stage in their learning.

## Attendance- Fixed Penalty Notices- What you need to know

### What you need to know

The Department for Education (DfE) has introduced a new national framework which will mean all Local Authorities have the same rules in place for when they consider a fine for holidays during term time or persistent absenteeism. Every moment in school counts and days missed add up quickly. Evidence shows that pupils who have good attendance enjoy better wellbeing and school performance than those who do not. There are only a few circumstances where a child is allowed to miss school, such as illness or where the school has given permission because of an exceptional circumstance. However, if your child misses' school for another reason, the Local Authority and schools can intervene, and you may be issued a fine.

### How much could I be fined if my child misses' school?

Under the new national framework, all schools will be required to consider a fine when a child has missed 10 or more sessions (5 days) for unauthorised reasons. The fine for school absences across the country is £80 if paid within 21 days, or £160 if paid within 28 days, per parent, per child.

In the case of repeated fines, if a parent receives a second fine for the same child within any three-year period, this will be charged at the higher rate of £160. Fines per parent will be capped to two fines within any three-year period.

Once this limit has been reached, other action like a parenting order or prosecution will be considered.

If you are prosecuted and attend court because your child has not been attending school, you could get a fine of up to £2,500.

### How can we be sure parent fines are fair?

Fines are a last resort, and parents will be offered support to help improve their child's attendance first. Most fines for unauthorised absence (89%) are issued for term time holidays or extended travel absences.

### What if my child needs to miss school?

Your child must attend every day that the school is open, unless:

- Your child is too ill to attend that day (e.g. temperature above 37.8, vomiting, diarrhoea).
- You have asked in advance and been given permission by the school for your child to be absent on that day due to exceptional circumstances.
- Your child cannot attend school on that day because it is a day you are taking part in religious observance (on a day 'set aside' by the religion you adhere to).

## Autumn Term Attendance

### **What happens if my child misses' school for another reason?**

If your child is absent and you have not received advance permission from the headteacher to take your child out of school, the school and local council may take action.

Before that, your child's school and your local council are expected to support you to improve the child's attendance before any measures are put in place.

These measures can include:

-Issue a fixed penalty notice, otherwise known as a 'fine' – your local council can give each parent a fine. If you do not pay the fine after 28 days, you may be prosecuted for your child's absence from school.

-Seek an Education Supervision Order from the family court – if the council thinks you need support getting your child to go to school but you are not working with the school or appropriate support services, they can apply to a court for an Education Supervision Order. A supervisor will be appointed to help you get your child into education. The local council can do this instead of, or as well as, prosecuting you.

-Prosecute you – this means you have to go to court. You could get a fine, a community order or a jail sentence up to 3 months. The court could also give you a Parenting Order.

### **What if I have family who live abroad?**

A large proportion of our children at Elmtree have members of their extended **family who live abroad** and cultural ties to other countries. We know that it can be very difficult when a family member falls unwell, where family events take place abroad, and the difficulty of trying to fit religious or cultural traditions into the holiday periods. And we fully understand, as school staff, that holidays, flights and other travel is far more expensive in the school holidays. Nonetheless, we **do not** authorise trips abroad during term time because we want to prioritise the children's learning and progress.

It is important that your child is in school every day, not just for your child's learning, but also for their overall wellbeing, wider development, and their mental health.

We want to continue to support families in attending school if you wish to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to contact us.



## CELEBRATION

### Happy Birthday

- Evie - Beech
- Malik - Maple
- Ismah - Oak

### Headteacher Award

- Enes - Birch
- Loshein - Cherry
- Jesse - Nursery

### Well Done Certificates

- Alishbah - Maple
- Franio - Cherry
- Scarlett - Oak
- Loshein - Cherry
- Taylor - Maple
- Aditya - Maple
- Rayaan - Oak



# Attendance

School attendance over the last 7 days is **97%**

Let's aim to be in **#SchoolEveryDay** next week

**Champion Year Group: YEAR 1**

**This weeks attendance**

*Reception - 97%*



*Year 1 - 98%*



*Year 2 - 94%*



Remember that

**#MomentsMatter**

We expect all children to attend school for at least 96% of sessions across the year.



**ATTENDANCE**  
EVERY DAY COUNTS!

Expected attendance means having no more than seven days off in the school year!

**Attendance matters!**



**MOMENTS  
MATTER,  
ATTENDANCE  
COUNTS.**



## Dates for the diary

13th January Deadline for school applications

20th January “January Joy Day” more information to follow

20th January Stay and play sessions for ALL classes (art) 9.00-9.45am

5th February Maple Class Assembly 9am

12th February Cherry Class Assembly 9am

17th February—21st February Half Term

24th February Return to School



## **Home Learning**

Last term, we held a parent forum session. In your feedback, you said you wanted a more streamlined and consistent approach to home learning that is manageable for children and families. You also wanted work that children can handle mostly independently with some support from you.

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## **Cold weather alert**

Buckinghamshire issued an AMBER Cold-health alert last week and this has now been extended. The amber cold health alert extension is in effect from **12PM on 06/01/2025 until 12PM on 12/01/2025** across Buckinghamshire.

Government advice can be found here: [Keeping warm and well: staying safe in cold weather - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/keeping-warm-and-well-staying-safe-in-cold-weather)

### **Things you can do to stay warm and safe:**

1. try not to sit still for more than an hour or so
2. if you find it difficult to move about, stretch your arms and legs can also help keep you warm
3. if you have visitors, it can help stop the spread of germs to [ventilate the room](#) for a few minutes before and after they arrive; you might be more comfortable leaving the window open during their visit, if it's not too cold
4. when out and about, wear shoes with good grip to avoid slips and falls on slippery or icy surfaces.
5. heat your home to a temperature that is comfortable for you; low indoor temperatures can have a serious impact on your health, especially if you have medical conditions or are older.

### **Simple changes can help to keep you and your home warm. These include:**

6. try to heat rooms you spend a lot of time in, such as the living room or bedroom, to at least 18°C
7. try to reduce draughts; you can fit draft excluders around doors cheaply
8. keep your bedroom windows closed at night
9. wear several layers of thinner clothing; this could keep you warmer than one thicker layer





# Elmtree Infant and Nursery School

## Home Learning Guidance and Principles

Introduction At Elmtree Infant and Nursery School, we believe that home learning can enhance a pupil's development, attainment and progress and is therefore an important part of a child's education. It is also an opportunity to foster a love for learning with your child through both curriculum and creative opportunities as well as an opportunity to strengthen the home-school partnership.

### Aims of the policy

Through implementation of this policy, we aim to:

- Give pupils the opportunity to reinforce, consolidate or extend their learning in areas of the curriculum and/ or of personal interest
- Ensure a consistent approach throughout the school
- Encourage children to develop the confidence, independence, self-discipline and motivation needed to study on their own and prepare them for the next phase of education
- Make set home learning relevant and meaningful for the child linked to work learned at school
- Make expectations about home learning clear to children, parents and other carers
- Provide opportunities for parents and children to work together, thereby, fostering an effective partnership between home and school

### Why do we value homework?

Children benefit greatly from the mutual support of parents and teachers in encouraging them to learn both at home and at school. By valuing home learning, pupils are afforded the chance to practise skills, consolidate understanding of work learned in the classroom and to widen their own interests. Moreover, developing good study habits provides an opportunity for pupils to develop self-discipline, independence and the ability to take responsibility for their own learning.

Research shows that when parents are engaged in their child's school life, pupils are more likely to do well academically, have higher self-esteem, and exhibit positive behaviour.

## Principles

Our home learning opportunities will focus on non-negotiables of reading with your child at least 4 times a week and listening to you child read at least four times a week, as well as basic skills and practise for phonics (blending and segmenting) and key concepts with number.

We want children to have the best chance at achieving their full potential. With home learning opportunities children can demonstrate their learning for the most important skills in English and Mathematics as well as demonstrate their wider interests, knowledge and skills from across the curriculum.



## Our Commitment

- The amount and difficulty of home learning is tailored according to the child's age and ability, including where a child has Identified additional needs as part of an Education Health and Care Plan.
- Sufficient time is allowed for the completion of home learning to allow for a healthy home- and school-work balance.
- As the children progress through the school so the amount of home learning increases and the relevant time allocation for this.
- Teachers ensure that the tasks are adapted where necessary, purposeful and aimed at reinforcing, developing and/ or consolidating basic skills and concepts learned in class.
- Home learning should be linked to previous learning and key skills and must be meaningful and relevant.
- Teachers provide parents and pupils with clear learning objectives and motivational instructions for tasks as well as clear examples of work to guide both children and adults.
- Parents and carers will be informed about our aims in setting home learning and about the importance this type of work plays in children's education.
- We are committed to family time for you and your child. Home learning will not require worksheets, helping to support our wider commitment to reducing paper usage and deforestation; and will not require screen time for our youngest learners (in Nursery and Reception) so that we can continue to promote and support activities that can be done together/ as a family.

### Home Learning Activities

Our home learning is designed to build upon the concepts and skills that pupils have been learning first and foremost in English and Mathematics. In addition, we may, on occasion, set home learning activities linked to the wider curriculum for the same purposes of reinforcing, consolidating or practising learning, or indeed for enrichment and enjoyment.

A breakdown of how home learning is structured in each phase is provided below. This has been designed to encourage a gradual progression of skills and expectation so that by the time children reach Year 2 they have established a clear routine in preparation for junior school.

## Expectations

It is the expectation that all children will at least attempt to complete home learning tasks to the best of their ability, with your support. If pupils need support to access these activities, then they may be invited to attend a lunchtime home learning club for Purple Mash/ Bug Club when these are available.

The curriculum activities and time set aside for children to complete their home learning as a guide is as follows:

| <b>Nursery</b>                               | <b>Reception</b>                             | <b>Year 1</b>                               | <b>Year 2</b>   |
|--|--|---|---|
| Be read to by an adult daily in any language | Be read to by an adult daily in any language | 1 hour<br>4x 10 minutes reading to an adult | 1 hour, 25 minutes<br>Reading to an adult at least 4 times a week |



|  |  |                        |  |
|--|--|------------------------|--|
|  | 4x 10 minutes reading to an adult (phonics reading book) | (phonics reading book) | Spellings                                  |
|  | Phonics/ tricky word practice                            | Spellings              | Phonics                                    |
|  | No worksheets  | Phonics                | Maths (PurpleMash/ Times Table Rock Stars) |
|  |  | Maths (Purple Mash)    |  |

**On occasion, home learning activities linked to the wider curriculum will be given for the same purposes of reinforcing, consolidating or practising learning, or indeed for enrichment and enjoyment.**

## How you can help your child with their home learning

Below is a list of ways that you as a parent can show your child that you value their home learning, and the time and effort spent completing it. The school will also provide clear and regular reminders of their expectation when it comes to home learning. As a school we hope that you will find this guidance helpful in supporting your child fully with their homework. You can show you value your child's home learning by:

- ⇒ making a commitment to our family pledge of ensuring you read to your child (in any language) at least 4 times a week; listening to your child read at least 4 times a week; helping them with their home learning activities in partnership
- ⇒ providing a suitable place in which your child can do their home learning, preferably with an adult to discuss, encourage and support.
- ⇒ making it clear to your child that you value home learning and support the school in explaining how it can help learning.
- ⇒ encouraging your child and praising them when they have completed work set.
- ⇒ signing and dating your child's completed home learning to show that it is a true reflection of their best efforts.
- ⇒ ensuring work is complete and returned to school on time.
- ⇒ checking your child spends a suitable amount of time on home learning and it is not rushed.



**Additionally, you can support your child's development by:**

- visiting libraries, museums, age-appropriate performances etc.
- cooking with them
- taking your child swimming
- playing games, e.g. board games, cards, ball games
- watching informative TV programmes together
- providing opportunities for craft activities, e.g. cutting, sticking, sewing, painting etc.
- gardening and growing plants
- using the internet to research something with your child (following guidelines for safe internet use)
- talking to your child about schoolwork, their day, what they have been learning about and how they have been learning

We want to give Elmtree children the very best start in life and that means working in partnership with parents, carers and our community. When parents are engaged in their child's school life, children are more likely to do well academically, have higher self-esteem, and exhibit positive behaviour.

Remember: Home learning is about reinforcing, practising and confidence building. Enthusing your child about undertaking home learning and modelling the high value of home learning to them is of key importance. Make it fun!



## Special Educational Needs Focus Feature

### Debunking Myths

Elmtree is an inclusive school where every child is inspired to achieve personal excellence and develop a passion for lifelong learning. Our mission is to enable each child at our school to flourish by providing a secure, happy and stimulating environment where they receive consistently good teaching and leave us with a love for learning as thoughtful, caring and confident future citizens.

We know that learning has no bounds. All our children are different, and they are all unique. Each child offers different characteristics, talents and skills that they come with as well as those that they learn with us. What follows is an article, released last year, dispelling some of the most common misconceptions about special needs. We want all our children and families to feel happy and safe at Elmtree. This means working together to help our children with special needs to feel welcome, valued and part of our Elmtree community.

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#### **Misconceptions About Children with Special Needs: Breaking Down the Myths, Reanne Joy, 8th August 2024**

Children with special needs often face a range of misconceptions that can affect their development, inclusion, and overall well-being. These misconceptions not only impact the lives of the children themselves but also influence the attitudes and actions of those around them. Addressing and correcting these misconceptions is crucial for fostering an inclusive and supportive environment. Here, we explore common myths about children with special needs and provide evidence-based insights to dispel them.

#### **1. Misconception: Special Needs Children Are Less Intelligent**

One of the most prevalent misconceptions is that children with special needs have lower intelligence. This myth is both misleading and harmful. In reality, special needs encompass a broad spectrum of conditions, including learning disabilities, autism spectrum disorders, and developmental delays, each affecting cognitive and emotional functioning in different ways. Intelligence is not uniformly impacted; many children with special needs exhibit average or above-average intelligence. For instance, a study by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) found that **children with learning disabilities often have average to above-average intelligence** but may struggle with specific academic skills (NICHD, 2000).

## **2. Misconception: Special Needs Children Will Never Lead Independent Lives**

Another common myth is that children with special needs will always be dependent on others and unable to lead independent lives. While some conditions may present challenges, many children with special needs grow up to be independent and self-sufficient adults. According to a study published in the Journal of Special Education, early intervention and appropriate educational support can significantly enhance the independence and quality of life for individuals with special needs (Guralnick, 2001). With the right support and resources, these children can achieve a high level of independence and **contribute meaningfully to society**.

## **3. Misconception: All Special Needs Children Have the Same Needs**

The idea that all children with special needs have the same requirements is a gross oversimplification. Special needs is an umbrella term covering a wide range of conditions, each with its own set of needs and challenges. For example, a child with autism may require different support strategies compared to a child with ADHD or a specific learning disability. The American Psychological Association (APA) highlights that individualised educational plans and tailored interventions are essential for addressing the unique needs of each child (APA, 2013).

## **4. Misconception: Special Needs Children Are Always Difficult to Manage**

There is a belief that children with special needs are inherently difficult to manage, which can lead to negative attitudes from peers and adults. However, children with special needs, like all children, have diverse personalities and temperaments. Many of these children are well-behaved and engaging. The key is understanding and supporting their specific needs and behaviours. Research by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) shows that **positive reinforcement, structured routines, and supportive environments can significantly improve behaviour and learning outcomes for children with special needs** (CDC, 2014).

## **5. Misconception: Special Needs Children Are the Result of Poor Parenting**

Blaming parenting for a child's special needs is a harmful misconception that ignores the complex interplay of genetic, biological, and environmental factors. Special needs conditions can arise from various causes, including genetic mutations, prenatal factors, or brain development issues. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) states that **these conditions are not caused by parenting choices but rather by a combination of factors beyond a parent's control** (AAP, 2016).

## Conclusion

**Misconceptions about children with special needs can perpetuate stigma and hinder their opportunities for success. By debunking these myths and promoting a more accurate understanding, we can create a more inclusive and supportive environment for all children. Recognising and addressing the individual needs of children with special needs, rather than relying on stereotypes, is essential for fostering their growth and development.**

## References

- American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). (2016). *Children with Disabilities*. Retrieved from <https://www.aap.org/>
- American Psychological Association (APA). (2013). *Effective Interventions for Children with Special Needs*. Retrieved from <https://www.apa.org>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). (2014). *Early Childhood Development*. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/childdevelopment>
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- National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD). (2000). *The NICHD Study of Early Child Care: The Role of Parent-Child Interactions in Cognitive Development*. Retrieved from [https://www.nichd.nih.gov/NICHD\\_website](https://www.nichd.nih.gov/NICHD_website)

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There are also the reactions of other parents to consider, including the attitude that having a child with special needs is a fashionable excuse for poor behaviour (Mumsnet). Where a child may refuse to speak for example, they are not being rude, controlling or even choosing not to speak, they may be genuinely frozen in fear or gripped by anxiety in a particular situation. Jan Tregelles, chief executive of Mencap, said that parents of children and young people with a learning disability are regularly

"confronted with attitudes grounded in ignorance, prejudice and hostility". She added: "They have been hurt and angered by unwanted attention from people in the street staring at their children." The same is true of hurtful comments said about children with special needs or disabilities.

## **Final thought**

By reflecting on our own misconceptions, we can work towards dispelling such beliefs and build a more inclusive community at Elmtree and more widely. Until we have walked the path of a parent with a child with special needs or disabilities, we should never presume to know what it is like, much less make assumptions based on our own misconceptions. We are incredibly blessed to have such unique children at Elmtree. All branches make a tree and at the heart are our roots of being inclusive, curious, ambitious, resilient and respectful.

## **More information**

For those interested in a community perspective, I highly recommend watching the film, 'In a Different Key.' It tells the story of Don, considered to be the first person ever to be diagnosed with autism.

You can watch the trailer here: [IN A DIFFERENT KEY the Movie Trailer on Vimeo](#)