

# ST. CHAD'S C.E.(C) PRIMARY SCHOOL

## ATTENDANCE POLICY

### "Building Together for a better future"

#### Background:

*Central to raising standards in education and ensuring all pupils can fulfil their potential is an assumption so widely understood that it is insufficiently stated - pupils need to attend school regularly to benefit from their education. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school. (DFE School Attendance November 2013)*

*The government expects:*

*Schools and local authorities to:*

- *Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence;*
- *Ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled; and,*
- *act early to address patterns of absence.*

*Parents to:*

- *perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly*
- *All pupils to be punctual to their lessons.*

(These expectations are included in our Home School Agreement).

*Regular and punctual attendance at school is both a legal requirement and essential for pupils to maximise their educational opportunities. In recognition of this, the law makes it an offence for a parent/ carer to fail to secure the regular attendance of their child at a school at which the child is a registered pupil, without good reason or the agreement of the school. (Staffordshire Local Authority Code of Conduct)*

#### Legal Framework:

- Section 444A of the Education Act 1996 (as inserted by section 23 of the Anti-Behaviour Act 2003) empowers designated Local Authority (LA) officers, head teachers (as well as deputy and assistant head teachers authorised by them) and the Police to issue Penalty Notices in cases of unauthorised absence from school.
- The Education Penalty Notices (England) Regulations 2007
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006.
- The issuing of Penalty Notices must conform to all requirements of the Human Rights Act 1998 and the Equality Act 2010.
- Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 makes it an offence if a parent fails to secure their child's regular attendance at school at which they are registered, if that absence is not authorised by the school. Penalty Notices supplement the existing sanctions currently available under s444 Education Act 1996 or s36 Children Act 1989 to enforce attendance at school where appropriate.
- As a result, the Local Authority has responsibility for developing a local code of conduct that will govern how all of the partners named in the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003, will issue Penalty Notices.
- **The Government implemented new legislation effective from 1st September 2013 which means that no requests for holidays can be authorised except in exceptional circumstances.**

#### Aims:

We believe here at St Chad's that promoting positive behaviour and excellent attendance is the responsibility of the whole school community.

The school will promote positive behaviour and good attendance through its use of curriculum and learning materials. Good attendance and behaviour by pupils will be recognised appropriately. All children should be at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

All children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems that arise with attendance are best resolved between the school, the parents and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse. **Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence by the parent.**

**Definitions:****School Day**

Our school has two sessions divided by a lunch break. The length of each session, break and the school day is determined by the school's governing body.

*The governing body has the power to revise the length of the school day as it sees fit. There is no requirement to consult parents on revisions to the school day.*

	<u>Session 1</u>		<u>Session 2</u>	
	<u>Start</u>	<u>End</u>	<u>Start</u>	<u>End</u>
Nursery	8:50am	11:50am	12:10pm	3:10pm
Reception	8:50am	11:30am	12:30pm	3:10pm
Infants (KS1)	8:50am	12:00pm	1:00pm	3:15pm
Juniors (KS2)	8:50am	12:15pm	1:15pm	3:20pm

Schools are required to take the attendance register twice a day, and this shows whether the pupil is present, engaged in an approved educational activity off-site, or absent. If a pupil of compulsory school age is absent, every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school as either **AUTHORISED** or **UNAUTHORISED**. Only school can authorise the absence, not parents. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required, preferably in writing.

**School Year**

Schools meet for at least 380 sessions or 190 days during any school year to educate their pupils.

**Late**

All children in Years 1 to 6 should be on the junior playground ready for the bell which is rung at 8:50am. When the children hear the bell they line up. Year 6 children walk around the school to their classroom. The teachers then supervise the children entering their buildings.

Reception and Nursery children wait with their parents for the side gate to be opened and walk straight into their classrooms.

Once the last child has entered the mobile unit or building, the doors are closed and locked to ensure the safety of everyone. Any children arriving after the closure of the doors will report to the main office where they will be signed in. This ensures that all children are recorded as present in the register, thus ensuring their safety.

Children arriving after the doors are locked but before 9:15am are marked in the register as **late**. Children arriving after 9:15am (without an acceptable reason such as a medical appointment) will be marked as an unauthorised absence for that session. When arriving late, children should always be accompanied by an adult who can sign them in.

**Identification:**

Parents whose children are experiencing difficulties should contact the school at an early stage and work together with the staff in resolving any problems. Parents and children will be supported by school and the Local Support Teams, Education Welfare Officers, as appropriate, to overcome barriers to regular attendance, through a range of intervention strategies. Penalty Notices may be issued by the Local Authority to combat attendance problems. The Local Authority issues Penalty Notices and the monies paid are collected by the Local Authority and not the school.

**Procedures:**

St Chad's Primary school applies the following procedures in deciding how to deal with individual absences:

- Attendance must be promoted as a positive issue.
- Pupils who have achieved a full term attendance are presented with a certificate at the end of each term and a trophy for 100% attendance for the full academic year. In addition certificates are awarded to the class with best attendance each week. This is detailed on the fortnightly newsletter.
- The importance of regular attendance is stressed at new intake meetings and parent's evenings. Regular reminders are given to all parents through school communications.
- Parents are requested to keep their contact details up to date by reminders in the school newsletter.

- The involvement of outside agencies who can give positive support and advice. Educational Welfare, Social Services, Local Support Teams and School Nurse.
- When an individual pupil's attendance level falls below 87% in any term without good reason, a referral to the EWO will be made by the school.
- All requests for 'Leave of Absence' are submitted on the schools form.

### Daily absence

- If a child is absent from school, parents are requested to telephone, text or email the school on the first day of absence to make staff aware of the absence and the reason. If the absence continues, parents are expected to keep school up to date.
- The school operates a First Day Contact System- **Parents must contact the school before 10.00am** to explain their child's absence.
- If a child fails to arrive at school and we have not been notified by a letter, phone call, e mail, text or verbal discussion (with member of staff) from the parent/carer advising us of the reason for the absence, we will telephone the parents to check on the whereabouts of the child. **This is a safeguarding issue.**
  - If we are unable to make contact with parents/carers we will telephone the other people listed as emergency contacts for the child.
  - If we are unable to confirm the whereabouts of the child we may visit the child's home, contact the school's Educational Welfare Officer or telephone Social Services.
  - This system helps to prevent a situation where parents think a child is at school, and the school thinks that the child is at home.
  - If we suspect that a holiday is being taken, even when parents have given us another reason for the absence, we will request a home visit from the EWO to determine the actual reason for the absence.

### PENALTY NOTICES

#### Definitions:

**Unauthorised Leave of Absence**= unauthorised holiday requests, weddings, funerals, competitions etc (which are not classed as exceptional circumstances).

**Unauthorised Absence**= all other absences which are not authorised eg sickness in a child with poor attendance may not be authorised, persistent arrival after close of register etc)

#### PENALTY NOTICES will be considered appropriate if one of following criteria is met:

- For **unauthorised leave of absence- holidays etc**

Penalty notices may be issued for **ten sessions (5 days) of unauthorised absence** (These 10 sessions do not need to be consecutive- this can be a cumulative total over previous 3 terms). The previous threshold of absence being below 87% to trigger a penalty notice, was removed by the Local Authority in March 15. *For a penalty notice, there must be a minimum of 2 sessions of unauthorised 'leave of absence' within the total of 10 sessions of unauthorised absence.*

#### *Examples:-*

*A child takes 'leave of absence' for 5 days/ 10 sessions (or more) unauthorised (in total within a three term time period)- penalty notice.*

*A child takes 2 days/ 4 sessions unauthorised 'leave of absence' (holiday) and has 3 days/ 6 sessions unauthorised absence (of any type) in the past 3 terms= penalty notice.*

- For **unauthorised absence- unauthorised sickness etc**

Penalty notices may be issued **for at least 20 sessions (10 school days) lost due to unauthorised absence** during the current and previous 3 terms. These absences do not need to be consecutive. These absences do not include holidays (see unauthorised 'leave of absence')

Where children are persistently absent due to illness, a doctor's note or medical report may be requested before an absence is recorded as authorised.

- For **Persistent late arrival at school**, i.e. after the register has closed. "Persistent" means at least 20 sessions of late arrival. These late episodes do not need to be consecutive.  
Children who are persistently late, cause concern- Parents will be informed and contacted by the school who in turn may contact the Education Welfare Officer.
- The **presence of an excluded child in a public place** at any time during school hours in that child's first five days of exclusion. An "excluded child" is one who has been excluded from school for a given period under the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

Notes:-

- A Penalty Notice can only be issued in cases of any unauthorised absence
- There is no limit on the times a Penalty Notice for unauthorised 'leave of absence' (holidays etc) can be used in an academic year.
- Use of a Penalty Notice or formal warning of a Penalty Notice for 'unauthorised absence' will be restricted to one notice/ warning per parent of a pupil per academic year.
- In cases where there is more than one pupil in a family with unauthorised absences, Penalty Notices may be issued for more than one child.
- In the event of any child who is on the 'At Risk' register and does not appear at school, the school will contact the appropriate body immediately (Social Services/First Response).

Local Authority information:- Penalty Notice fine is £60 per parent per child. This increases to £120 if not paid within 21 days. Failure to pay the £120 fine within the period 22 to 28 days may lead to court proceedings.

#### **Holidays during term time**

**The new law gives no entitlement to parents to take their child on holiday during term time.** Any application for leave must only be in exceptional circumstances and the headteacher must be satisfied that the circumstances are exceptional and warrant the granting of leave. Head Teachers would not be expected to class any term time holiday as exceptional. School will consider each request individually, taking into account circumstances such as: frequency of requests, pupil's achievement and attendance history.

Any requests for 'Leave of Absence' should be made on the schools own form- available from the school office or on the schools website. School replies to requests by letter. In some cases the Headteacher will request a meeting with parents to discuss the matter.

In cases where unauthorised 'leave of absence' occurs without prior request from parents, the school may still request the issue of a penalty notice, unless evidence of can be provided to the contrary of leave of absence being taken. In cases where Leave of Absence is suspected without prior request, school may request the EWO to visit home and investigate further.

#### **Roles and Responsibilities:**

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend. The Headteacher, School Governors and School Staff are committed to working with parents as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

#### **Equal Opportunities:**

All adults and children are treated equally and in accordance with our school values. This is regardless of gender, culture, race, religion, class, age or disability.

#### **Monitoring and evaluation:**

All attendance is monitored closely by the Leadership Team, Governors and Office staff.

This policy is reviewed annually.

Approved:                   MAY 2017

Review:                     SPRING 2018