

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

## ATTENDANCE POLICY

### "Building Together with Jesus for a better future"

We are a Church of England School and our policies are written with a commitment to our Christian Character, which is rooted in the Bible.

*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the person of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)*

#### **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.*

*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 2013
- 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

Our school is committed to providing a stimulating and enjoyable education experience for all pupils. We, therefore, believe that if pupils are to benefit from the education we offer, good attendance is crucial. We believe here at St Chad's that promoting positive behaviour and excellent attendance is the responsibility of the whole school community.

We expect all children on roll to attend every day and on time, when the school is in session, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so. We do all we can to encourage the children to attend, and to put in place appropriate procedures. We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is development of positive attitudes towards school. To this end, we strive to make our school a happy and rewarding experience for all children. We will reward those children whose attendance is very good.

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.**

Under the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1995, the governing body are responsible for making sure the school keeps an attendance register that records which pupils are present at the start of both the morning and the afternoon sessions of the school day. This register will also indicate whether an absence was authorised or unauthorised.

St Chad's Primary school applies the following procedures and strategies to promote good attendance.

- 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 and forms sent home annually.
- The involvement of outside agencies who can give positive support and advice.
- School monitors closely any attendance which falls below 90%. This may trigger a letter home and request for medical evidence for any further absences.
- All requests for 'Leave of Absence' are submitted on the schools form.

**Our overall attendance target is 97%.**

## 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.

### **DAILY ABSENCE PROCEDURES**

- 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, a home visit may be conducted to determine the actual reason for the absence.

### **LATE PUPILS**

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 onto the decking for the doors to be opened.

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 9:05am are marked in the register as **late**. Children arriving after 9:05am (without an acceptable reason such as a medical appointment) will be marked as an unauthorised late (U) for that session. When arriving late, children **MUST** always be accompanied by an adult who can sign them in.

### **AUTHORISED ABSENCE**

An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or guardian. For example, if a child has been unwell, the parent telephones the school to explain the absence.

Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents and carers do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents and carers will be classified as authorised. For example, if a parent takes a child out of school to go shopping during school hours, this will not mean it is an authorised absence.

### **UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE**

No holidays requested during term time are authorised, unless under exceptional circumstances.

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of both the school and a parent. Therefore, the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.

Examples of other absences which may not be authorised include sickness absence or requests for leave in a child with poor attendance; persistent arrival after close of register; health appointment without evidence of appointment card.

**Exceptional Circumstance Request Forms** are available from the school office. Each request is considered by the Headteacher and the overall pattern of attendance and punctuality over the year is scrutinised. If it is shown that the child has a poor record then absences may be deemed unauthorised. The school diary (eg test dates) and pupils achievement may also be taken into account.

### **HOLIDAYS**

**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.

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, the school may conduct a home visit and investigate further.

### **MEDICAL AND DENTAL APPOINTMENTS**

We expect parents to make medical and dental appointments for their children before or after school or during the school holidays. If this is not possible then authorisation will be given where confirmation of the appointment is received from the parent/carer by showing the medial appointment card. Children are expected to attend school prior to the appointment and parents are expected to return their children to school following the appointment whenever possible.

### **BEREAVMENT/ SPECIAL OCCASSIONS**

Although sensitive to these requests, school will take into account circumstances such as: frequency of requests, pupil's achievement, school and pupils current attendance and attendance history. School will consider each request individually

### **PROCEDURE FOR TAKING A CHILD OUT OF SCHOOL DURING THE DAY**

Exit from the school during school hours is only through the main entrance. The absence is recorded on the signing out system with the reason; if they are returning to school they should be signed back in using the same system. Children will not be allowed to leave during school hours unless accompanied by a responsible adult.

### **PENALTY NOTICES**

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 any period of leave of absence not authorised by the headteacher.
- 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 last twelve weeks. 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 will 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

10 sessions of late arrival during the last 12 weeks. 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.

### **ROLES AND REPOSIBILITIES**

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 OPPORTUNITES**

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 and other protected characteristics

### **MONITORING AND REVIEW**

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

This policy is reviewed annually.

Approved: Spring 20

Review: Spring 2021