

Churchdown Village Infant School Attendance Policy

Introduction

This is a successful school and your child plays their part in making it so. We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to reach out for excellence. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and your child should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. It is very important therefore that you make sure that your child attends regularly and this Policy sets out how together we will achieve this.

Underpinning this commitment is the understanding that unless children attend school regularly and punctually they will not be able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them.

The responsibility for raising and promoting attendance is shared by parents, carers, children, and the school by co-operating and working together so we can maintain our attendance level and our excellent achievements.

The Department for Education expects every school to nominate an 'Attendance Lead' who will hold overall management responsibility for raising and promoting school attendance. However this person cannot act in isolation. In order to achieve improvement and consolidation, time and resource must be made available. Improvements in attendance must be the business of all staff and must be addressed consistently by all concerned.

The school has an obligation to return attendance figures to the Department of Education three times a year via school census and keep records for Ofsted inspections as well as reporting to Full Governing Body each term.

Why Regular Attendance is so Important

Learning:- Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class.

Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is the parent's/carer's legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Safeguarding:- A child may be at risk of harm if they do not attend school regularly. Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility and within the context of this school, promoting the welfare and life opportunities for a child encompasses:-

Attendance
Behaviour Management
Health and Safety
Access to the Curriculum
Anti- bullying

Failing to attend this school on a regular basis will be considered as a safeguarding matter.

Promoting Regular Attendance

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, pupils and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Celebrate good attendance by awarding certificates of 100% attendance.
- Attendance is monitored within the school by a designated person. Patterns and concerns are identified and brought to the attention of the Headteacher.
- The Headteacher may contact the parent to discuss any concerns that has been brought to their attention.
- Headteacher has an open door policy for parents/carers to discuss any problems they may have in getting their child ready/to school
- Parents receive an attendance summary at parents evening to inform them and discuss with teacher if their attendance is below expectations.

The school has nominated a governor to take on the role of Attendance Governor to help support the Headteacher and governing body regarding the law relating to **attendance of the Education Act 2006**

The Law relating to safeguarding

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities and governing bodies to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and students under the age of 18.

Understanding types of absence

Every **half-day** absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which **unavoidably** fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This type of absence can lead to Churchdown Village Infant School using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- truancy before or during the school day
- absences which have never been properly explained
- children who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- day trips and holidays in term time which have not been authorised by the school.

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If the 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 usually make things worse.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 15% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority. The Headteacher and the Attendance/Safeguarding Governor will discuss the appropriate actions needed to be taken to resolve the issues and support the parents/carers in doing so.

Thresholds	The following are suggested actions at each threshold:
100%>	Reward regular attendance
<95%	<p>Pupils with attendance at, or below, 95% (equivalent to one session missed every two weeks)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For each absence, a designated member of staff makes a telephone call to the family home as early in the day as possible. • Ensure appropriate consultation with the Company Secretary / Headteacher
<90%	<p>Pupils up to 90% (equivalent to one session missed per week) -Make first day calls as above.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send a standard letter to parent pointing out the deterioration in attendance levels. • Remind the parent of the school's target levels for attendance and the negative effect of irregular attendance on learning • Keep in contact with parents on a weekly basis. Provide encouragement where improvement has been made. • Ensure appropriate consultation with the Company Secretary / Headteacher
<85% PA	<p>Pupils up to 85% - Maintain the approaches set out at the previous thresholds. The Headteacher / Attendance Governor should be involved and should add weight to any interventions already in place.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask parents to attend a meeting in school with Headteacher, and the Attendance Governor / Safeguarding Governor, chaired by the Headteacher. Use the meeting to investigate why pupil has missed 1.5 sessions per week on average and is now a persistent absentee. Discuss <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Detrimental effect on learning. ○ Warn of likelihood of referral to the Local Authority Attendance Service unless improvement is made. ○ Reach agreements for rapid improvements over the next half term. ○ Remind the parent that full attendance is the aim and that anything less than 95% will cause concern. ○ Consider using a parenting contract between school and parent. ○ Monitor attendance very closely and keep in weekly contact with the parent, either to praise attendance levels or to show ongoing concern. • Referral to the School Attendance Officer should be considered at this stage.
<80%	<p>Pupils up to 80% (equivalent to one day or two sessions missed per week)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referral to Headteacher 1st and Attendance Governor / Safeguarding Governor to consider further actions including: • Parent Contract • Parental Notice • Penalty Notice

Parenting Contracts

A parenting contract¹⁷ is a formal written signed agreement between parents and either the local authority or the governing body of a school and should contain:

¹⁷ Section 19 of the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003

¹⁸ Section 19 of the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003 provides that parenting contracts can be entered into where a child who is a registered pupil has engaged in behaviour connected with the school which is likely to cause significant disruption to the education of others, significant detriment to the welfare of the child himself or of other pupils or to the health and safety of staff or the pupil is at risk of exclusion.

¹⁹ Section 8 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 parenting orders for irregular attendance.

²⁰ Section 98 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 states that where a school or local authority have reason to believe that a pupil has behaved in such a way as to cause, or be likely to cause, significant disruption to the education of other pupils or significant detriment to the welfare of that pupil or other pupils or to the health or safety of any staff. Or, where the pattern of behaviour (if continued) could lead to the pupil being excluded.

- A statement by the parents that they agree to comply for a specified period with whatever requirements are set out in the contract; and
- A statement by the local authority or governing body agreeing to provide support to the parents for the purpose of complying with the contract.

Parenting contracts can be used in cases of misbehaviour¹⁸ or irregular attendance at school or alternative provision. Parenting contracts are voluntary but any non-compliance should be recorded by the school or local authority as it may be used as evidence in court where an application is made for a behaviour parenting order.

The local authority or governing body should fund any support required to implement a parenting contract (such as referral to parenting classes) and provide information to parents about other types of support available, such as details of national and local agencies and helplines.

Parenting Orders

Parenting orders¹⁹ are imposed by the court and the parents' agreement is not required before an order is made.

Parenting orders are available as an 'ancillary order' following a successful prosecution by the local authority for irregular attendance or breach of a school attendance order.

They are also available as a 'free-standing order' by direct application by the governing body of a school, or local authority to the Magistrates' Court, in cases²⁰ either where exclusion has taken place or where there has been serious misbehaviour²⁰. An application for a parenting order for misbehaviour must be made within 40 school days of the date upon which the latest instance of serious misbehaviour occurred or, if applicable, the date on which the exclusion review process ends. If a parent has already entered into a parenting contract, an application can be made within 6 months of the date the contract was signed.

Parenting orders consist of 2 elements

- A requirement for parents to attend counselling or guidance sessions (e.g. parenting education or parenting support classes) where they will receive help and support to enable them to improve their child's behaviour. This is the core of the parenting order and lasts for up to 3 months; and,
- A requirement for parents to comply with such requirements as is specified in the order. This element can last up to 12 months.

All parenting orders must be supervised by a 'responsible officer' from the school (behaviour orders only) or local authority. They are individually named in the parenting order.

Any breach by parents without a reasonable excuse could lead to a fine of up to £1,000. The police may enforce any breach of an order by a parent.

Parents have a right to appeal a parenting order to the Crown Court.

Penalty Notices

Penalty notices²¹ are fines of £60/£120 imposed on parents. They are an alternative to the prosecution of parents for failing to ensure that their child of compulsory school age regularly attends the school where they are registered or at a place where alternative provision is provided.

²¹ Section 23 of the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003

²² Section 103 and 105 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and the Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007 (S.I 2007/1867)

²³ Section 104 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006

²⁴ S.I. 2007/1867

Penalty notices can only be issued by a head teacher or someone authorised by them (a deputy or assistant head), a local authority officer or the police. All schools and the police must send copies of penalties issued to the local authority. Penalty notices can be issued to each parent liable for the attendance offence or offences.

Penalty notices can be used where the pupil's absence has not been authorised by the school. Penalty notices may also be issued where parents allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification during the first five days of a fixed period or permanent exclusion²². The parents must have been notified by the school at the time of the exclusion of this and the days to which it applies²³.

The Code of Conduct

The *Education (Penalty Notices) Regulations 2007*²⁴ set out the details of how the penalty notice scheme must operate. This includes a requirement that every local authority must draw up and publish a Code of Conduct for issuing penalty notices, after

Absence Procedures:

If your child is absent you must

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence via;
- Leave message on the school's answering machine, by email or direct contact with school office.

If your child is absent we will

- Telephone on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you;
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with the Headteacher in the first instance and then with our Attendance Governor or if absences persist;

Telephone Numbers

There are times when we need to contact parents about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have your contact numbers at all times. So help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up to date number – if we don't then something important may be missed. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence.

How we manage lateness

The doors open at 8.45am but the school day starts officially at **8.55am** and we expect your child to be in class at that time.

Registers are marked by **9.00am** and your child will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time.

At **9.30am** the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the Headteacher and Attendance Governor to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

Holidays in Term Time

Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not to take children away in school time.

Remember that any savings you think you may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to your child's education.

There is no automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday.

The 2006 Regulations (revised September 2013) also define the arrangements for holiday leave: Head teachers should only authorise leave of absence in exceptional circumstances. If a head teacher grants a leave request, it will be for the head teacher to determine the length of time that the child can be away from school. Leave is unlikely, however, to be granted for the purposes of a family holiday as a norm.

All applications for leave must be made in advance and at the discretion of the school a maximum of 10 days in any academic year may be authorised. In making a decision the school will consider the circumstances of each application individually, including any previous pattern of leave in term time.

It is important that you understand the circumstances when leave in term time will **not** be agreed by us:

- **When a pupil is just starting the school.** This is very important as your child needs to settle into their new environment as quickly as possible.
- Immediately before and during assessment periods (SATS),.
- When a pupil's attendance record already includes any level of unauthorised absence.
- Where a pupil's attendance rate is already below (90%) or will fall to or below that level as a result of taking holiday leave.

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised.

School Targets, Projects and Special Initiatives

The Governing Body sets an attendance target each year which is returned to DfE and recorded by Ofsted on School Inspection and all children, parents/carers have an important part to play in achieving this target.

The minimum level of attendance for this school is 95% attendance and the school website will be updated regularly about progress of the school's attendance level overall.

Our aim is to consistently achieve this level because we know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling and we believe our pupils can be amongst the best in the County.

Those people responsible for attendance matters in this school are

- **Mrs Julie Guest – Acting Headteacher**
- **Mrs Sellars - Company Secretary/Attendance Officer**

- Mrs Sarah Butler - Attendance Governor
- Mr Mike Taylor - Safeguarding Governor

Summary

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to School Governors, DfE and to parents to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend.

All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible and that every child's welfare and life opportunities are promoted.

Safeguarding

Churchdown Village Infant School has a Safeguarding Policy which aims to protect every child in its care by ensuring that everyone in the school, teachers, non-teaching staff and volunteers have clear guidance on the detection and management of situations where the child's safety and/or emotional welfare is suspected or is seen to be at risk.

Review

This policy was drawn up by the Safeguarding Governor and Company Secretary, working in consultation with the Headteacher and Full Governing Body.

It was formally adopted by the Full Governing Body on 8th May 2014

This policy will be reviewed during October following the targets set during September 2015

Signed..... Signed..........

(Headteacher)

(Attendance Governor)



I have read and understood the terms and conditions of the attendance policy at Churchdown Village Infant School for academic year 2014/15.

Child's Name: Class:

Signed:

Parents/carers



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