

St Christopher's CE Primary School

Attendance Policy – November 2017

Mission Statement

St Christopher's school recognises that positive behaviour and good attendance are central to raising standards and pupil attainment. We are committed to working with parents and the community to ensure children gain the greatest benefit from their education. It is vital that they attend regularly and be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. We take account of the Education Act (1966), The Education Regulations (Pupils Attendance Records- 1991 and Pupil Attendance Regulations -1997) when writing this policy.

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 the absence was authorised or unauthorised.

Aims

To provide clear guidelines about how the school promotes and attains high levels of pupil attendance. This will ensure that all stakeholders understand the school's expectations of themselves, and each other, and strive to attain them.

Objectives

- To achieve a 100% attendance rate for all pupils
- To discourage days taken as holiday, during term time
- To promote partnership between parents and school, working for the benefit of the children's learning
- To involve other agencies when all school based supportive measures have been put in place.

The policy will give clear guidance on expectations and procedures for the following:

- Pupils
- Parents
- Staff
- Governors

Procedures for implementation

Expectations of pupils:

- To attend school regularly, aiming for an attendance rate of 96 – 100%
- To arrive on time and appropriately prepared for the day
- To inform a member of staff of any problem or reason that may hinder them from attending school.

Expectations of parents:

- To ensure their child/ren attends school, aiming for a 96 – 100% attendance rate
- To contact school as soon as it is reasonably practical (e.g. by 9.00am) whenever their child is unable to attend
- To ensure any absence is followed by a verbal or written explanation of why the child was absent and for what period of time if it is more than one day
- To ensure that their child arrives in school well prepared for the school day
- To contact the school, in confidence, whenever any problem occurs that may keep their child away from school

- To refrain from taking the child out of school for holidays, or occasional days, unless there are significant exceptional circumstances

Expectations of school:

- To ensure regular, efficient and accurate recording of presence / absence
- To make early contact with parents when a child fails to attend
- To monitor attendance regularly and offer support to pupils and families/ arrange parent contract meetings when attendance is at risk of falling below 96%
- To refer to appropriate support agencies as required
- To communicate clear expectations of what is good attendance
- To give clear guidance as to how good attendance is promoted

Expectations of Governors:

- To monitor the effectiveness of the policy through Head teacher reports
- To support the school in encouraging good attendance through role modelling
- To communicate with parents/ carers and other agencies as appropriate
- To nominate members for the attendance panel when necessary
- To attend celebration assemblies for good attendance

School Procedures related to attendance:

Registration

- Registration periods are 8.30 – 8.50am / 13.00 – 13.10pm. Registers will be completed during these periods and returned to the office at the end of registration
- Registers will be completed using the codes identified in Appendix A
- If no information, regarding the absence of a child, has been received by 9.30am, the office will telephone the parent to check the reason for absence
- If there is no initial reason given for the absence, or letter of explanation on the child's return, this will be recorded as unauthorised absence

Authorised and unauthorised absence

For any leave of absence, you must complete a form from the office. All requests are unauthorised unless there are exceptional circumstances where a decision is at the head teacher's discretion, following statutory requirements and the school's policy on attendance.

Authorised absence

- Absence will be authorised if the school has notification from the parents that the child is ill. This should usually take the form of an initial notification at the beginning of the period of absence (by phone message or ParentMail message) and either a note of confirmation or a verbal message on the child's return if the absence is longer than one day
- If the child has an emergency medical appointment with the doctor or dentist or a hospital appointment that cannot be made outside school hours, this will be considered as an authorised absence. Regular absences for medical reasons will be raised as a concern with parents. Parents must request the period of absence or inform the school in advance.

An absence may not be authorised, even if the parents give a reason, if the absences are persistent. In the case of repeated absence due to illness, the school will request confirmation from the GP that the child has a medical condition that seriously impacts on their ability to attend school regularly.

Unauthorised absence

Absences will not be authorised if the following occur:

- Unexplained absence
- Absence for a shopping trip or looking after a younger child at home
- A trip or holiday

- Any absence that is not considered by the panel to be as the result of extenuating circumstances
- The changes to attendance involve regulations regarding requests for leave of absence.
- If a child arrives after the register has closed at 9.15am, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Absence Requests

When putting in a request, we must know the reason for the absence i.e. holiday, funeral, visa applications etc. Any leave of absence overseas requested for funerals/weddings/family sickness will count as three days communicated leave and the remaining time as unauthorised holiday. The local authority will continue to issue penalty notice warnings and fines for unauthorised holidays/leave.

Response to non attendance:

- If a child is absent, and contact is not received from the parents, the parents will be contacted on the first day of absence by telephone. If no contact can be made, either through work or mobile numbers, the school will use the contacts list provided by parents.
- Where there has been no response, or explanation, the school will post a letter to the parents/carers requesting information regarding the absence.
- Where there continues to be no response to the school intervention, and the absence has persisted without explanation, the school will refer the issue to OCC as a missing child (this is after 5 days with no contact).

Monitoring attendance:

- Attendance will be monitored weekly for the previous 3 weeks attendance. Any children whose attendance has fallen below 96% parents will receive a ParentMail informing them their attendance is below expected level, and they have 3 weeks to improve.
- If in 3 weeks attendance has improved, a ParentMail will be sent thanking them for their co-operation and informing them the child's attendance has risen to expected level.
- If in 3 weeks no significant improvement is made, a Parent Meeting to be called by the Attendance officer where a Parent Contract will be issued and it will be agreed to monitor for a further 3 weeks. If parent doesn't attend meeting, and fails to rearrange, Deputy/Headteacher to call meeting.
- Again, if improvement is made during this period, a ParentMail will be sent and no further action to be taken.
- If no improvement is made despite warning, parent meeting and contract, a meeting with Deputy/Headteacher will be called.
- In circumstances where attendance has not improved despite receiving support and where there is at least 20% unauthorised absence over 100 sessions the school will issue a Penalty Warning Notice.
- In extreme circumstances, where the issue cannot be resolved between school and parents, the school will refer the matter formally to the Attendance and Engagement Team, and where necessary, legal proceedings will be instigated.

Monitoring Lateness:

- Lates to be monitored over previous 6 weeks. Any children with 6 or more lates in this period to receive ParentMail reminding them of what time school starts, and that an improvement needs to be made. Parents will be informed that they will be monitored for a further 3 weeks and an improvement is expected to be made.
- If in 3 weeks punctuality has improved, a ParentMail will be sent thanking them for their co-operation and informing them how their child's education will now greatly improve.

- If in 3 weeks lateness is still an issue, a Parent Meeting to be called by Attendance Officer where a Parent Contract will be issued and it will be agreed they will be monitored for a further 3 weeks. If parent doesn't attend, and fails to rearrange, Deputy/Headteacher to call meeting.

Penalty Notices and Legal Actions

The Law

The Education Act 1996 Part 1, Section 7 states:

The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable-

- (a) To his age, ability and aptitude and
- (b) To any special needs he may have,

Either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

For education purposes the term parent is used to include those that have parental responsibility and/or those that have the day to day care of the child.

The legislation that appertains to children who are of compulsory school age and are registered at school is contained within this Act.

Part V1 Section 444 contains the details of when an offence is committed if a child fails to attend school.

In cases of persistent absenteeism, the school reserves the right to issue a Penalty Notice Warning which could result in a referral to the The County Attendance Team to issue a fine or take further legal action through the Magistrates' Court system.

A Parent/Carer can be issued with a penalty notice if:

- They fail to ensure that their child attends school, or other education provision regularly, usually defined as six or more unauthorised absence sessions over a six week period;
- They allow their child to take leave of absence during term time without the school's authorisation;
- They fail to return their child to school on the agreed date after a period of authorised leave of absence;
- Their child persistently arrives late for school after registration is closed.

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' (PA) when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year **for whatever reason.** Absence at that level is doing considerable damage to any child's education prospects and we need parents' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

The school monitors all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is a risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and parents will be informed of this immediately.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully by the school and a parenting contract meeting will be offered between parent, pupil and school to try and help resolve any issues. PA cases may be referred to the County Attendance Team and if necessary, they have a range of legal powers open to them to enforce attendance including parenting orders, education supervision orders and

prosecutions. If convicted of an offence a parent could face a fine of up to £2,500 per parent and/or 3 months imprisonment.

A Welcome Back

It is important that on return from an absence that all pupils are made to feel welcome. This should include ensuring that the pupil is helped to catch up on missed work and brought up to date on any information that has been passed to other pupils.

Incentives for good attendance:

- Raffle – All families of children with 96% attendance and above are entered into a raffle at the end of every term. This will be drawn at random by the Headteacher in assembly, and a prize to the value of £50 will be won. This being something the whole family can enjoy e.g. Family Bowling Trip, Sainsburys Vouchers etc.
- Celebratory Postcards sent home – All children who achieve 100%, above 96% and show most improvement to receive a postcard congratulating them posted home at the end of each term.
- Tea Party – The Class who receives the most ‘Best Attendance of the Week’ marks each term (tallied on the Attendance Board in Reception) to win a Tea Party in the Hall at end of term with Headteacher and possibly Chair of Governors??
- To continue with current system 1 term, 2 terms and whole year Bronze, Silver and Gold Certificates, Chocolate, Balloons and Vouchers.
- To continue with weekly ‘Best Class Attendance’ and ‘Best Class Punctuality’ certificates
- Reasons for regular attendance and arriving on time, well prepared for school will be raised in assemblies and PHSCE sessions
- Parents will receive reports on their child’s level of attendance at Parent consultations in November, February and July.

Monitoring and evaluating effectiveness

- The SLT and Administration Team will analyse attendance data at the end of each of the six terms to identify issues and trends
- The school will evaluate the success of the procedures by measuring the annual attendance % against their target at the end of the year, and their progress towards attaining the target in February.

Summary

Through the implementation of the policy, the following will be achieved:

- a 95% + attendance rate
- a positive partnership between parents and school, working for the benefit of the children’s learning
- clear and transparent procedures and expectations understood by all stakeholders

Date of review:....November 2019

Signed.....Catherine Clayton (Chair of Performance and Standards Committee)

Signed Sheenagh Broadbent.....(Headteacher)