

**CHILHAM ST.MARY'S
CHURCH OF ENGLAND
PRIMARY SCHOOL**



**Attendance
POLICY DOCUMENT**

DOCUMENT REVIEW (EVALUATION)

DATE OF REVIEW: **September 2015**

DATE OF NEXT REVIEW: **October 2017**

STAFF RESPONSIBLE: **Headteacher, Attendance Officer**

Signed: _____ (Chair of Governors)

Signed: _____ (Headteacher)

Date: _____

Our Mission Statement

We work together to provide a loving and caring environment, strongly founded upon Church of England beliefs. Everyone is valued and respected and encouraged to 'learn to love and love to learn!'

STATEMENT OF INTENT

Chilham St. Mary's Primary is committed to the continuous raising of achievement of all our pupils. Regular attendance is critical if our pupils are to be successful and benefit from the opportunities presented to them.

One of our basic principles is to celebrate success. Good attendance is fundamental to a successful and fulfilling school experience. We actively promote 100% attendance for all our pupils and we use a variety of weekly, termly and annual initiatives and rewards to promote good attendance and punctuality.

The Governors, Headteacher and Staff, in partnership with parents have a duty to promote full attendance at Chilham St. Mary's Primary School

STATUTORY FRAMEWORK

Under Section 199 of the 1993 Education Act, a pupil is required to attend regularly at the school where he/she is a pupil.

The school is obliged by law to differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence. A letter or telephone message from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence. Only if the school is satisfied as to the validity of the explanation offered by the letter/message will the absence be authorised.

Agreement to each request is at the discretion of the Headteacher, acting on behalf of the Governing Body and within the parameters of the current policy (Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006). Each case will be judged on its merits.

RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Maintaining and improving attendance levels at School is the responsibility of the whole school community, including pupils, parents, all staff and governors.

Pupils

All pupils are expected to attend school and all of their lessons punctually.

Parents and Information about Attendance

Parents **have a legal duty** to ensure that their child attends school daily, punctually and properly dressed and equipped. If a child is prevented for any reason from attending, or is late, parents are requested to notify the school by 9.15 am on the first day of absence, by telephone. A pupil's absence from school must be considered unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation is forthcoming from the parent. Parents will be promptly informed of any concern which may arise over a child's attendance*.

*As of September 2013, in line with new requirements and guidelines for attendance issued to all schools, we will be following specific criteria for informing parents regarding attendance:

If a child's attendance falls below 96% then the school will inform you in writing. Attendance will be monitored very closely beyond this to ensure that it remains at an acceptable level.

A summary of the child's attendance record will be recorded on his/her report in reports in February and at the end of the summer term.

Parents should avoid making medical/dental appointments for their child during school hours. If this is unavoidable then an appointment card must be presented to the office.

School

Staff will encourage good attendance and punctuality through personal example. Attendance is the responsibility of all school staff. The school will employ a range of strategies to encourage good attendance and punctuality and will promptly investigate all absences, liaising closely with parents.

REGISTRATION PROCEDURES

Children are expected to be in class ready for registration by 8.50 am. If anyone receives a telephone message regarding a pupil's absence, the message is passed on to the school office.

Registers are called at 8.55 am and 1.00 pm respectively and pupils arriving after these times will be marked absent. If pupils arrive after this time, they should report to the school office whereby the absence mark is amended to late. If a pupil is persistently late, the Headteacher will discuss this with the parents to see if a solution can be found.

Parents are reminded that if a child arrives in school after the 9.15 am and an acceptable explanation is not forthcoming, the pupil will be recorded as "unauthorised absent" for that session.

The registers are inspected regularly by the Attendance Officer and difficulties or discrepancies will be discussed with the Headteacher.

AUTHORISED/UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE

Only the Headteacher can authorise absence for approved reasons. Where there is doubt, the Headteacher, on behalf of the governing body, takes a consistent approach. The absence must be unavoidable. The Headteacher is **not obliged** to accept a parent's explanation.

Authorised absence codes will only be used after there has been some communication between the parent and school.

The following reasons are examples of the kinds of absence that will not be authorised:

- Persistent non specific illness e.g. poorly/unwell
- Absence of siblings if one child is ill
- Oversleeping
- Inadequate clothing/uniform
- Confusion over school dates
- Medical/dental appointments of more than half a day without very good reasons
- Child's/family birthday
- Shopping trip
- Holidays booked as a 'surprise' by another family member

The law says that schools can **only authorise** absence if your child has an acceptable reason for not being at school. Absence is very unlikely to be authorised if a child's attendance during the last year is below 95% and will not be authorised if this absence would take it below 95% for the year.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE/HOLIDAY

From September 2013 the Department for Education have amended the Pupil Registration Regulations, **removing the Headteacher's ability to authorise leave of absence for the purpose of a family holiday.**

Requests for holidays in term time will not be authorised.

The Headteacher may authorise absence in "exceptional circumstances" but this must be requested in advance and in writing and agreement to each request is at the discretion of the Headteacher, acting on behalf of the Governing Body (Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006). Each case will be judged on its merits and the Headteacher's decision is final. Once the decision not to authorise leave is taken, it cannot be authorised retrospectively.

If the absence is not authorised and the holiday is taken anyway, the case may be referred to the Attendance Service. The Attendance Service have a legal right to issue a penalty notice to each parent for each child that is taken out of school. The school does not issue penalty notices but cannot prevent a penalty notice being issued by the attendance service if a case is referred.

Procedures for following up lateness of absence

The school has a policy of first day response to absence. If no message has been received from a parent about an absent child, then the school will do everything possible to contact the home during the day to find out the reason for absence.

If a pupil is persistently (or intermittently) absent, the Attendance Officer will write to the parents and set up a meeting at school to discuss the situation.

If a pupil is persistently absent (or late without explanation) and the school's efforts to effect an explanation following all detailed procedures have been unsuccessful, a referral to the Education Welfare Officer will be made.

Notes from parents will be kept in the child's file in the school office. All telephone messages regarding absence or lateness are to be recorded in the telephone message book in the school office.

Strategies Promoting Attendance and Punctuality

Chilham St Mary's CEP School seeks to offer an environment in which pupils feel valued and happy. We believe the school's ethos demonstrates that pupils feel that their presence in school is important, that they will be missed when they are absent or late and that follow up action will be taken.

A broad and balanced curriculum will be offered to all pupils, which is varied and flexible enough to meet the needs of all pupils, with learning tasks matched to pupils' needs.

Attendance data will be collected regularly and analysed in order to help identify patterns, set targets, correlate attendance with achievement and support and inform policy and practice.

Pupils whose attendance is a cause for concern will be set targets for improvement, in discussion with parents. Such targets will be monitored and reviewed by the Headteacher and class teachers.

Parents will be reminded regularly (via newsletters, the school brochure, parents' evenings, annual reports to parents, etc.) of the importance of good attendance.

Work provision for pupils absent through sickness or holiday

Pupils who are absent for any length of time through illness or injury will (if appropriate) have work sent home for them so that they should not fall behind or get out of the routine of good working habits. This is applicable to absences longer than 1 week in the main but each case is taken on its own individual merits in liaison with the parents/carers as appropriate.

Pupils who **are taken on annual leave**, whether authorised or not, will not be provided with work as it is through the whole teaching approach to a topic, via daily lessons, that subjects and skills are effectively taught, allowing for work to be adapted and misconceptions addressed, on an ongoing basis by the teaching staff.

The Headteacher will make termly reports to the Governing Body on issues relating to attendance.

When appropriate, the school will liaise with other agencies (e.g. Education Liaison Officer, Schools' Psychology Service, Social Services, Child and Family Guidance, Minority Communities Achievement Services, etc.) when this may serve to support and assist pupils who are experiencing attendance difficulties.

APPENDIX 1

School Liaison Officer Attendance Referral

This may include:

- Home visits,
- multi agency meetings
- sign posting to supportive agencies e.g. Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, Social Care and Family Group Conference Service.

From February 2005, **Kent Local Authority (LA)** introduced Penalty Notices for unauthorised absence from school of at least 10 sessions (5 days) in a current term.

As you can see from the above we take this opportunity to remind parents of the expectations placed upon schools as required by law.

Should the Attendance Service deem it necessary to issue a penalty notice, the following circumstances will have been considered as appropriate reasons for issuing the notice:

- Truancy
- Parentally-condoned unauthorised absences
- Holidays in term time
- Delayed return from authorised leave
- Persistent lateness after the register has closed

On receipt of the Notice, the penalty will be **£120** reduced to **£60** if paid within 21 days. Failure to pay the penalty notice in full by the end of the 28 day period may result in prosecution by the Local Authority.

At Chilham St. Mary's, in line with all other schools, we consider attendance and these new legal requirements very important. Chilham St. Mary's Church of England Primary School will adhere to the law in all instances in ensuring that attendance is stringently monitored. The law will be applied by the school without exception.