

**THIS DOCUMENT IS a statement of the aims, principles and strategies for the Attendance Policy at Chalfont St Giles Village School.**

**IT WAS DEVELOPED during May 2018.**

**THIS POLICY was reviewed in November 2024 and will be reviewed again in the Autumn term 2025.**

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## **Attendance and Punctuality Policy**

### **1. Introduction**

Regular school attendance is essential if children are to achieve their full potential.

At Chalfont St Giles Village School, we believe that regular school attendance is key to enabling children to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and become emotionally resilient, confident and competent adults who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community.

At least 95% attendance is the nationally expected level for children at primary school. Parents should be aware that if their child misses a significant amount of time at school this will have a negative impact on their progress.

We value all pupils. As set out in this policy, we will work with families to identify the reasons for poor attendance and try to resolve any difficulties.

We recognise that attendance is a matter for the whole school community. Our Attendance Policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is a strand that runs through all aspects of school improvement, supported by our policies on safeguarding, behaviour and teaching and learning. This policy also takes into account the Human Rights Act 1998, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and the Race Relations Act 2000.

### **2. Legal Framework**

Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act states that parents must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

A child is of Compulsory School Age at the beginning of the term following their 5<sup>th</sup> birthday. A child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach the age of 16, however they must remain in full time education, a traineeship or apprenticeship until they are 18.

Under the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents secure education for children of compulsory school age and where necessary, use legal enforcement.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, require schools to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and then again during the afternoon session.

The register must record whether the pupil was:

- present;
- absent;
- present at approved educational activity; or
- unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

Amendments for the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 came into force on 1 September 2013. For primary schools these amendments referred to term time holiday and education penalty notices.

### **3. Roles and Responsibilities**

Chalfont St Giles Village School believes that attendance is primarily the responsibility of parents/carers. However, improved school attendance can best be achieved if it is viewed as a shared responsibility of the school staff, governors, parents, pupils and the wider school community.

### **The governing board**

The governing board is responsible for:

- Setting high expectations of all school leaders, staff, pupils and parents/carers
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties, including:
  - Making sure the school records attendance accurately in the register, and shares the required information with the DfE and local authority
  - Making sure the school works effectively with local partners to help remove barriers to attendance, and keeps them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data and helping school leaders focus improvement efforts on individual pupils or cohorts who need it most
- Working with school leaders to set goals or areas of focus for attendance and providing support and challenge
- Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

### **The headteacher**

The headteacher is responsible for:

- The implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary
- Working with the parents/carers of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to develop specific support approaches for attendance for pupils with SEND
- Communicating with the local authority when a pupil with an education, health and care (EHC) plan has falling attendance, or where there are barriers to attendance that relate to the pupil's needs
- Communicating the school's high expectations for attendance and punctuality regularly to pupils and parents/carers through all available channels
- Sharing information from the school register with the local authority, including:
  - Notifying the local authority when a pupil's name is added to or deleted from the school admission register outside of standard transition times
  - Providing the local authority with the details of pupils who fail to attend school regularly, or who have been marked with an unauthorised absence for a continuous period of 10 school days
  - Providing the local authority with the details of pupils who the school believes will miss 15 days consecutively or cumulatively because of sickness
- Making sure all staff receive adequate training on attendance as part of the regular continued professional development offer, so that staff understand:
  - The importance of good attendance
  - That absence is almost always a symptom of wider issues
  - The school's legal requirements for keeping registers
  - The school's strategies and procedures for tracking, following up on and improving attendance, including working with partners and keeping them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate
- Leading, championing and improving attendance across the school
- Setting a clear vision for improving and maintaining good attendance
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having a strong grasp of absence data and oversight of absence data analysis
- Regularly monitoring and evaluating progress in attendance

- Establishing and maintaining effective systems for tackling absence, and making sure they are followed by all staff
- Liaising with pupils, parents/carers and external agencies, where needed
- Building close and productive relationships with parents/carers to discuss and tackle attendance issues
- Creating intervention or reintegration plans in partnership with pupils and their parents/carers
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

**Staff are responsible for:**

- Contributing to a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance; with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve
- Complying with the Registration Regulations, England, 2006 and other attendance related legislation
- Implementing systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site
- Analysing attendance data to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Contributing to the evaluation of school strategies and interventions
- Working with other agencies to improve attendance and support pupils and their families
- Documenting interventions used to a standard required by the Local Authority should legal proceedings be instigated

**School office staff**

School office staff will:

- Take calls from parents/carers headteacher about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system
- Contact parents for explanations for absence where these have not been provided.
- Transfer calls from parents/carers to the headteacher where appropriate, in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance

**Parents**

Parents are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day on time
- Call the school to report their child's absence on the day of the absence (and each subsequent day of absence), and advise when they are expected to return
- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day
- Seek support, where necessary, for maintaining good attendance
- Trying to avoid unnecessary absences. Wherever possible make appointments for the doctors, dentists etc. outside of school hours
- Asking the school for help if their child is experiencing difficulties and informing the school of any change in circumstances that may impact on their child's attendance
- Not keeping their child away from school to go shopping, to help at home or to look after other members of the family
- Avoiding taking their child out of school during term-time. Where this is unavoidable, sending a written leave request to the Head Teacher in advance of making travel arrangements.

**Pupils**

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day, on time

## Lateness and Absence Procedures

Where pupils of compulsory school age are recorded as absent, the register must show whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

Absence can only be authorised by the school and cannot be authorised by parents. All absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation for the pupil's absence has been received.

Parents should advise the school by telephone on the first day of absence and provide the school with an expected date of return. This should be followed up in the form of a written note or email from the parent/carer, though verbal explanations may be acceptable where this is considered appropriate. Alternative arrangements will be agreed with non-English speaking parents/carers.

Absence will be categorised as follows:

- Illness: In most cases a telephone call or a note from the parent informing the school that their child is ill will be acceptable. Parents may be asked to provide medical evidence where there are repeated absences due to reported illness. This will usually be in the form of proof of appointment from the medical professional.
- Medical/Dental Appointments: Parents are advised where possible to make medical and dental appointments outside the school day. Where this is not possible, pupils should attend school for part of the day. Parents should be prepared to show the appointment card/letter to the school.
- Authorised Absence – extra-curricular activities: Leave of absence permission is also required for further extra-curricular activities such as drama, sport, music etc. We support pupils in furthering these activities and understand that at times missing a short period from the school day is unavoidable, for example for music or dance exams. In these situations permission may be sought by sending a letter to the school explaining the nature and duration of absence required along with a copy of the appointment letter. Parents should give as much notice as is practicable in these situations.

Where longer or more frequent absence is requested, such as a run of work in a professional theatre, this must go through the same process as for exceptional leave of absence. The school must balance the opportunity this may provide against the effect on the child's education. Each request will be viewed on an individual basis according to circumstances.

- Suspension (no alternative provision made): Suspension from attending school is counted as an authorised absence. The child's class teacher will make arrangements for work to be sent home.
- Late Arrival: Registration begins at 8.55am. Pupils arriving after this time will be marked as present but having arrived late. The register will close at 9.15am. Pupils arriving after the close of register will be recorded as Late and marked on the register with an L.

On arrival after the close of register, pupils must immediately report to the school office. The absence will only be authorised if a satisfactory explanation for the late arrival can be provided, for example, attendance at a medical appointment. The absence will be recorded as **unauthorised** if the pupil has arrived late after the registers close without justifiable cause.

- Unauthorised Absence: Absence will not be authorised unless parents have provided a satisfactory explanation that has been accepted as such by the school.
- Exceptional Leave of Absence: The Head Teacher may authorise a leave of absence in exceptional circumstances only. This will not include family holidays except in the case of Service families. Only in **very exceptional circumstances** will leave of absence be granted in term time.

Appeals against the Head Teacher's decision will be referred to the Curriculum and Standards of the Governing Body.

Requests should be in writing and received not less than four weeks before the proposed period of absence and **before** any financial commitment has been made.

Documentary evidence of leave and return dates may be required in order to process your request. Retrospective requests will not be considered and therefore will result in the absence being categorised as unauthorised. Each request will be considered individually and will take the following factors into account:

- Length of the proposed leave
- Age of the pupil
- The pupil's general absence/attendance record
- Proximity of SATs and public examinations
- Pupil's ability to catch up the work missed
- Pupil's educational needs
- General welfare of the pupil
- Circumstances of the request
- Purpose of the leave
- Previous term time holidays taken
- When the request was made

All requests for leave of absence will receive a written response. Where a request has been granted, the letter should state:

- The expected date of return
- That parents must contact school should any delays occur

If the permission to take leave is not granted and the pupil is absent, the absence will be **unauthorised**. In such cases the school may refer the matter to the Education Welfare Service who may issue a Penalty Notice. .

### **Religious Observance**

We acknowledge the multi-faith nature of British society and recognise that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods or weekends and that this necessitates a consideration of authorised absence or special leave for religious observance. (Code R)

It is reasonable for a parent to allow their children not to attend school on any day of religious observance if recognised by the parent's religious body.

Parents are requested to give advance notice to the school if they intend their child to be absent.

However, in the interests of fulfilling the academic requirements of the school and limiting the authorised absence rate of the school, it is identified as reasonable and is no more than three days in total in any academic year, as a guide. Absence in excess of this will be categorised as unauthorised.

### **Sanctions**

Our school will make use of the full range of potential sanctions – including, but not limited to, those listed below – to tackle poor attendance. Decisions will be made on an individual, case-by-case basis.

### **Penalty notices**

The headteacher (or someone authorised by them), local authority or the police can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age, by issuing a penalty notice.

If the school issues a penalty notice, it will check with the local authority before doing so, and send it a copy of any penalty notice issued.

Before issuing a penalty notice, the school will consider the individual case, including:

- Whether the national threshold for considering a penalty notice has been met (10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks)
- Whether a penalty notice is the best available tool to improve attendance for that pupil
- Whether further support, a notice to improve or another legal intervention would be a more appropriate solution
- Whether any obligations that the school has under the Equality Act 2010 make issuing a penalty notice inappropriate

Under the new guidance, the threshold for issuing a fixed penalty notice is 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling 10-week period, this can be a combination of any unauthorised absence e.g., holiday taken in term time and sessions of being late after registration closed. These sessions can be consecutive or not.

The first penalty notice issued to a parent in respect of a particular pupil will be charged at £160 if paid within 28 days. This will be reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.

A second penalty notice issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil is charged at a flat rate of £160 if paid within 28 days. **Each responsible parent may receive a fine.**

Parents who receive a fixed penalty notice will have 28 days to pay the fine, this is paid to the Local Authority who must use to for the support of attendance matters. If they do not pay within this time the Local Authority must decide to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

### **Notices to improve**

If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate, but parents do not engage with offers of support, the school may offer a notice to improve to give parents a final chance to engage with support.

Notices to improve will be issued in line with processes set out in the local code of conduct for the local authority area in which the pupil attends school.

They will include:

- Details of the pupil's attendance record and of the offences
- The benefits of regular attendance and the duty of parents under [section 7 of the Education Act 1996](#)
- Details of the support provided so far
- Opportunities for further support, or to access previously provided support that was not engaged with
- A clear warning that a penalty notice may be issued if attendance doesn't improve within the improvement period, along with details of what sufficient improvement looks like, which will be decided on a case-by-case basis
- A clear timeframe of between 3 and 6 weeks for the improvement period
- The grounds on which a penalty notice may be issued before the end of the improvement period

## **Appendix 1** **Traveller children**

Traveller Absence: The aim for the attendance of Traveller children, in common with all other children, is to attend school as regularly and as frequently as possible.

To protect Traveller parents from unreasonable prosecution for non-attendance, the Education Act 1944, section 86, states that a Traveller parent is safe from prosecution if their child accrues 200 attendances (i.e. 200 half days) in a year. Traveller absence (Code T) is acceptable only when the family is engaged in a trade or business that requires them to travel and when the child is attending school as regularly as that trade permits. It does not mean that part-time education for Traveller children is legally acceptable, nor does it relieve parents of their duties to ensure that their children are receiving suitable education when not at school.

When in or around Buckinghamshire, if a Traveller family can reasonably travel back to their base school (see below) then the expectation is that their child will attend full-time.

Chalfont St Giles Village School will be regarded as the base school if it is the school where the child normally attends when they are not travelling. However, the pupil must have attended in the last 18 months. Traveller children can register at other schools temporarily whilst away from their base school. In such cases, the pupil's school place will be kept open for them whilst travelling. This is to protect them from unfairly losing their place at their school of usual attendance.

Chalfont St Giles Village School can operate effectively as the child's base school only if we are engaged in on-going dialogue with Traveller families. This means that parents must:

- advise of their forthcoming travelling patterns before they happen; and
- inform the school regarding proposed return dates

Chalfont St Giles Village School will authorise absence of Traveller children if we are satisfied that a family is travelling and has given indication that they intend to return.

Traveller children will be recorded as attending an approved educational activity when:

- The child is on roll and attending another visited school
- Undertaking supervised educational activity under the jurisdiction of another Local Authority's Traveller Education Service
- The child is undertaking computer based distance learning that is time evidenced

Where Traveller children are registered pupils at a school and are known to be present either at a site (official or otherwise) or in a house and are not attending school, the absence will be investigated in the same way as for any other pupil.

## **Appendix 2**

### **Deletions from the Register**

In accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, pupils will be deleted from the register only when one of the following circumstances applies:

- The school is replaced by another school on a School Attendance Order
- The School Attendance Order is revoked by the Local Authority
- The pupil has ceased to be of compulsory school age
- Permanent exclusion has occurred and procedures have been completed
- Death of a pupil
- Transfer between schools
- When a parent informs the school in writing that the pupil is to be withdrawn to be educated outside the school system
- Failure to return from an extended holiday after both the school and the local authority have tried to locate the pupil
- A medical condition prevents their attendance and return to the school before ending compulsory school-age
- In custody for more than four months (in discussion with The Youth Offending Team)
- 20 days' continuous unauthorised absence have elapsed and both the Local Authority and school have tried to locate the pupil
- A pupil has left the school but it is not known where he/she has gone after both the school and the Local Authority have tried to locate the pupil

Chalfont St Giles Village School will follow Buckinghamshire Council's Children Missing Education Protocol when a pupil's whereabouts is unknown.

## **Appendix 3**

### **Using Attendance Data**

All pupils' attendance will be monitored and will be shared with the Local Authority and other agencies if a pupil's attendance is a cause for concern.

This pupil level data will be used to trigger school action as set out in the escalation of intervention (Appendix 1).

Attendance data will also be used to identify emerging patterns and trends to inform whole school strategies to improve attendance and attainment.

Chalfont St Giles Village School will share attendance data with the Local Authority as required. All information shared will be done so in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018.

A summary of attendance rates will be reported to Governors on a termly basis.

## **Appendix 4**

### **Support Systems**

Chalfont St Giles Village School recognises that poor attendance is often an indication of difficulties in a child's life. This may be related to problems at home and or in school. Parents should make school aware of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and/or behaviour in school, for example, bereavement, divorce / separation. This will help the school identify any additional support that may be required.

We also recognise that some pupils are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance, for example, those pupils with special educational needs, those with physical or mental health needs, migrant and refugee pupils and looked after children.

The school will implement a range of strategies to support improved attendance. Strategies used will include:

- Discussion with parents and pupils
- Attendance report cards
- Referrals to support agencies
- Learning mentors
- Friendship groups
- Reward systems
- Time limited part time time-tables
- Additional learning support
- Behaviour support
- Inclusion units
- Reintegration support packages

Support offered to families will be child centred and planned in discussion and agreement with both parents and pupils.

## **Appendix 5** **Legal Sanctions**

Where intervention fails to bring about an improvement in attendance, Chalfont St Giles Village School will notify the County Attendance Team of the irregular attendance.

The County Attendance Team or the School may invite parents to attend a Parenting Contract Meeting and issue a formal warning of a Penalty Notice.

Parenting Contracts (Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003) A Parenting contract is a voluntary agreement between the Local Authority, school and the parent, it can also be extended to include the child and any other agencies offering support to resolve any difficulties leading to improved attendance.

The contract will outline attendance targets and will detail agreed actions that will help to achieve the target. The contract will be reviewed regularly.

The contract can be used as evidence in a prosecution should irregular attendance continue.

Penalty Notices (Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003) Penalty Notices will be considered when:

- Intervention has failed to bring about improvement and further unauthorised absence has occurred following written warning to improve.
- A pupil has taken leave of absence i.e. for the purpose of a holiday in term time and the absence has not been authorised by the school

A Penalty Notice gives the parent the opportunity to avoid a prosecution. A £60 fine per parent/carer, per child must be paid within 21 days. The fine increases to £120 per parent/.carer, per child if paid after 21 days but within 28 days of the date the Notice was issued.

Failure to pay the Penalty Notice may result in a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

Prosecution: The school will provide the Local Authority with evidence required for a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996. This is to ensure that parents realise their own responsibilities in ensuring attendance at school and most importantly about returning children to education.

## **Appendix 6** **Intervention Flow Chart**

School will notify parent of the child's irregular school attendance and offer them the opportunity and support to improve.



If you receive a letter informing you of concerns regarding your child's attendance you should

- Contact the school to discuss any difficulties you or your child may be experiencing
- Ensure your child attends school regularly



If there is no improvement and the parent has not provided a good reason for the absence, the school may refer to the Education Welfare Service



The County Attendance Team will invite you to attend a Parenting Contract Meeting and may issue a Warning of a Penalty Notice.



A Parenting Contract is a voluntary agreement between you and the Local Authority aimed at supporting you in improving your child's school attendance.



Whilst your involvement in a Parenting Contract is voluntary, if you fail to engage with the support offered and your child's attendance remains irregular, the Education Welfare Service may issue a Penalty Notice or begin legal proceedings in the Magistrates' Court.

If you are issued with a Penalty Notice of £60 per parent/carer, per child this must be paid in full within 21 days otherwise the Penalty will increase to £120 per parent/carer, per child. If you fail to pay the Penalty by the 28<sup>th</sup> day, the County Attendance Team may instigate legal proceedings against you.

If you are found guilty of this offence you can be fined up to £2500 and/or be imprisoned for a period of three months.