

Church Lawton School

Attendance Policy

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| Adopted by Governors: | December 2014 |
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1. Aims

Our school aims to meet its obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence.
- Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled.
- Acting early to address patterns of absence.

We will also support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure that their children of compulsory school age attend regularly and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

Attendance is important as we know that regular school attendance is one of the most powerful ways that we can prepare your child for success—both in school and in life. When school attendance is a priority, a child is helped to have the best start in life.

Good attendance is a key factor to ensure that pupils benefit from their education. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind and children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [working together to improve school attendance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of [The Education Act 1996](#)
- Part 3 of [The Education Act 2002](#)
- Part 7 of [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)

- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments\)](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)
- This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

3. School procedures

3.1 Attendance register

By law, all schools are required to keep an attendance register, and all pupils must be placed on this register.

The attendance register will be taken at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present.
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity.
- Absent.
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry.
- The amended entry.
- The reason for the amendment.
- The date on which the amendment was made.
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment.

[See Appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.]

Every entry in the attendance register will be preserved for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

3.2 Change of Address or other contact details

Parents must inform the school immediately if they, or the named emergency contacts have a change of address, phone number or email address. In case of emergency we must be able to contact the parents, carers or a third named person. Parents must provide this information when they first register their child, and keep information including telephone numbers up to date.

3.3 Timings for the school day

Pupils must arrive in school on time for each school day.

The morning sessions start at 9:00am and the afternoon sessions start at 1:00pm.

The register for the first session will be taken at 9:00am and will be kept open until 9:30am. The register for the afternoon session will be taken at 1:00pm and will be kept open until 1:30pm.

3.4 Unplanned absence

Parents must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence (for example, if their child is unable to attend due to ill health) by 8:30am or as soon as practically possible (see also section 6).

In the event of an unplanned absence, please contact the School directly:

Telephone: 01270 877601

Email: office@churchlawtonschool.org.uk

Should the absence continue then parents are requested to contact the school to confirm that their child will not be in school

Absence due to illness will be authorised unless the school has a concern about the authenticity of the illness. If this is in doubt, the school may ask parents to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. The school will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents will be notified accordingly.

3.5 Medical or dental appointments

An absence for the purpose of attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as an authorised absence, provided advance notice has been given to the school.

However, parents are encouraged to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

In the event that a child has a medical or dental appointment, please inform the School in advance directly:

Telephone: 01270 877601

Email: office@churchlawtonschool.org.uk

Applications for other types of absence in term time must also be made in advance but will be granted only in exceptional circumstances. Information clarifying what is meant by and exceptional circumstance is given in Section 4 and an application form requesting term time absence is at Appendix 2.

3.6 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late but before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code.

A pupil who arrives after the register has closed will be marked with a 'u' code 'representing an 'unauthorised absence' for that one session (morning or afternoon).

Careful monitoring of attendance by the Senior Leadership Team is in place to identify where there are ongoing punctuality issues. In these cases, support will be provided to parents/carers to address the problem. Such support will be tailored to the needs of individual families but may include:

- Initial discussions with the class teacher.
- Further support from a variety of professionals, including education and therapy teams.
- Additional support from our attendance officer.

3.7 Following up absence

The school will follow up any unexplained absences to ascertain the reason, ensuring that proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary and identifying whether or not the absence can be 'authorised'.

In the case of an unauthorised absence, the Principal will contact parents/carers to advise that the instance of absence will be recorded as unauthorised and a meeting to discuss this further will be offered.

In order to keep children safe in education, we require parents/carers to:

Provide a minimum of three contact numbers for their child, at least one of which should be for a different household.

If a pupil's absence is unaccounted for at the close of registration, the absence will be recorded as 'unauthorised' and parents/carers of that child will be contacted by:

- Calling every contact number that we hold for that pupil.

- If there is no response from any of these numbers, we will carry out a home visit.
- If there is nobody at home, we will inform the police that there is a missing child.
- If the child is absent without explanation for more than 10 days, a report will be made to the Local Authority as 'missing from education'.

3.8 Reporting to parents

The School reports to parents/carers on a pupil's attendance at annual review and using end of year reports. However, this can be sooner on request. The school will build respectful relationships with parents and families to ensure their trust and engagement. Open and honest communication will be maintained with pupils and their families about the expectations of school life, attendance and performance so that they understand what to expect and what is expected of them. The school will liaise with other agencies working with pupils and their families to support attendance, e.g. social services.

Parents will be expected to:

- Treat staff with respect.
- Actively support the work of the School.
- Call staff for help when they need it.
- Communicate with the School about possible circumstances which may affect their child's attendance or require support.

4. Authorised and unauthorised absence

4.1 Granting approval for term-time absence

Principals may not grant any leave of absence to pupils during term time unless they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'.

Please note that a family holiday is not normally considered to be an exceptional circumstance.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context underlying the request. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Principal's discretion. This request must be made at least a week in advance and cannot be authorised retrospectively. If the leave is taken despite refusal it will be 'unauthorised' and might trigger sanctions, including referral to the Local Authority for a penalty notice to be issued.

Valid reasons for an authorised absence include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments – as explained in sections 3.2 and 3.3.
- The funeral of a close family relative.
- Religious observance – not more than a single day where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the School will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart.
- Other unavoidable and exceptional circumstances, at the discretion of the Principal.

Invalid reasons for a pupil's absence include:

- A family holiday.
- The death of a pet.
- Religious observance that requires the pupil to be away for more than a day.
- The Senior Leadership Team meets regularly to discuss pupils causing concern and this includes where there are concerns relating to attendance such as:

- Overall attendance.
- Lengthy absences.
- Periods of unauthorised absence.
- Sporadic absences or a pattern of absences.
- Termly tracking of attendance highlights where attendance is poor and a range of strategies are employed to support families.
- Class teachers will communicate with parents/carers.
- In some cases, a letter will be sent to parents/carers to inform that there are attendance concerns.
- Pupils may be given case studies or attendance action plans.
- Strategies may be planned and deployed using input from a multidisciplinary team, including therapy/education teams and the Attendance Office

4.2 Legal sanctions

Parents/carers may be prosecuted for failing to ensure their child's regular school attendance and can be issued with a penalty notice for the unauthorised absence of their child.

If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice ultimately rests with the Principal who will follow the local authority's code of conduct for issuing penalty notices. Factors taken into account will include:

- The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year.
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission.

- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason.

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority will decide whether to prosecute the parent.

5. Strategies for promoting attendance

The School works with pupils and parents/carers to support regular attendance, for example, communicating early about issues, acknowledging positive improvements and providing good home/school communication systems.

For many of our pupils, transition points in the course of the day can be challenging and there are bespoke programmes in place to support with a smooth transition to school. Professionals can also provide support to parents/carers where necessary to devise strategies for a smooth home to school transition and to decrease pupil's anxieties at these times.

Parents/carers are encouraged to access specialist support and guidance from a range of professionals and there are also regular workshops, events and training evenings held at the School covering a range of topics related to the support of autistic children.

6. Attendance monitoring

The School monitors pupil absence on a daily basis.

Parents are expected to call the school in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health (see section 3.2) and parents and carers are expected to call the school on each day that their child is ill.

Due to the nature of our pupils' sometimes complex needs, each case will be individually considered. However, should absence be causing concern we will

contact the parents to discuss the reasons for this.

If after contacting parents a pupil's absence continue to rise, we will consider involving an education welfare officer.

The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee.

Pupil-level absence data is collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school's attendance data is compared to the national average and is shared with governors.

Our School collects and stores attendance data. It is used to track the attendance, identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern, and monitor and evaluate those children identified as being in need of intervention and support.

Registers are a legal responsibility and the information collected is used to report census information.

6.1 Analysing attendance

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

6.2 Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

- Provide regular attendance reports to Family Liaison Officer and School Attendance Lead and other school leaders, to facilitate discussions with pupils and families
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place to modify them and inform future strategies

6.3 Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance

7. Roles and responsibilities

7.1 Parents and Carers

Adults have a primary role in ensuring the attendance of pupils. Good examples of attendance and timekeeping by staff and parents and carers provide role models for pupils. Parents and carers are notified regularly via letters and newsletters about the importance of attendance and timekeeping, and their responsibility in ensuring regular attendance and the importance of notifying absences to school.

7.2 Pupils

Pupils are responsible for:

- Attending their lessons and any agreed activities when at school.
- Arriving punctually to lessons when at school.

7.3 The Governing Board

The Governing Board is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis. It also holds the Principal to account for the implementation of this policy.

7.4 The Principal

The Principal is responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented consistently across the school, and for monitoring school-level absence data, reporting it to Governors.

The Principal also supports other staff in monitoring the attendance of individual pupils and issues fixed-penalty notices, where necessary.

7.5 The Senior Leadership Team

The Senior Leadership Team:

- Monitors attendance data at the school and individual pupil level.
- Reports concerns about attendance to the Principal.
- Works with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence.
- Arranges calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues.
- Notifies the Principal on absences that might attract a penalty notice.

7.6 Class Teachers

Class Teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office.

7.7 Office staff

Office staff take calls from parents about absence and record the information on the school system.

8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Principal/Deputy Principal. At every review, any updates will be shared with parents/carers.

Appendix 1:

Attendance Codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

| Code | Definition | Scenario |
|------|-------------------------------|---|
| / | Present (am) | Pupil is present at morning registration |
| \ | Present (pm) | Pupil is present at afternoon registration |
| L | Late arrival | Pupil arrives late before register has closed |
| B | Off-site educational activity | Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school |
| D | Dual registered | Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered |
| J | Interview | Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment |
| P | Sporting activity | Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school |
| V | Educational trip or visit | Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school |
| W | Work experience | Pupil is on a work experience placement |

| Code | Definition | Scenario |
|---------------------------|------------|----------|
| Authorised absence | | |

| | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|
| C | Authorised leave of absence | Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances |
| E | Excluded | Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made |
| H | Authorised holiday | Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances |
| I | Illness | School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness |
| M | Medical/dental appointment | Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment |
| R | Religious observance | Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance |
| S | Study leave | Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations |
| T | Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence | Pupil from a Traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school |
| Unauthorised absence | | |
| G | Unauthorised holiday | Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school |
| N | Reason not provided | Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time) |
| O | Unauthorised absence | School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence |
| U | Arrival after registration | Pupil arrived at school after the register closed |

| Code | Definition | Scenario |
|----------|---|--|
| X | Not required to be in school | Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend |
| Y | Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances | School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody |
| Z | Pupil not on admission register | Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school |
| # | Planned school closure | Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day |

Appendix 2

Request for leave during term time

To: The Principal of: Church Lawton School Date: _____

I request consideration of a grant of leave of absence from school during term time for:

my child (full name) _____

for the period from (date) _____ to (date) _____

The **exceptional** circumstances and reason for this request are: -

I have another child(ren) in (an)other school(s) as follows

Child(ren) (full name(s)) _____

School(s) attended _____

Signature of 1st parent/carer(s) _____

Print Name _____

Signature of 2nd parent/carer(s) _____

Print Name _____

Please return completed form to the school office. The school will write to you and inform you of the decision on whether the request is authorised or not.