

ATTENDANCE POLICY



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Signed by:  **Head Teacher**

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Links to:
Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
Working together to improve school attendance
Keeping children safe in education 2022
Working together to safeguard children inter agency guidance
Ofsted securing good attendance and tackling persistent absence

1. Law and legislation

The Education Act 1996 (Section 7) states that:

- The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall ensure they 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
- Any parent who fails to ensure their child attends school regularly is guilty of an offence under the Education Act 1996
- A parent who fails to take reasonable steps to ensure their child attends school is committing a serious offence and can in, rare cases, be imprisoned

Parents/carers have a legal duty to ensure their child attends school regularly and are punctual.

2. Policy Statement and Principles

Regular school attendance has always been important. Without it, the efforts of the best teachers and the best school will come to nothing. Education provides a means of advancement for all young people. At Christ Church CE Primary School pupils need to attend regularly to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. We believe that irregular attendance undermines the educational process and leads to disadvantages. All schools are instructed by the government to raise safeguarding concerns if a pupil has poor attendance.

The aims of this policy are:

- To strive to improve the school's yearly attendance target.

- To reduce the number of authorised and unauthorised absences.
- To work effectively with local partners to help remove the barriers to attendance that go beyond the school gates, including building strong links with local statutory services (including social care, health and police), feeder schools and the voluntary and community sector.
- To develop strategies to help students improve attendance and develop support mechanisms for those with attendance issues.
- To ensure that students' achievements and progress are not undermined by attendance issues
- Ensure that poor attendance is challenged to safeguard pupils.

At Christ Church we believe attendance and attainment are linked and we require all students to be reaching an attendance target of at least 97%. As a school, we work hard to raise standards in education and support all students on their journey to achieve their full potential. We believe good attendance is essential for students to be given the best opportunity to achieve the highest possible grades. Students are expected to attend school every day.

3. Pastoral team roles and responsibilities

Name	Role	Contact Information
Mr Davies	Head Teacher/Attendance Officer	sdavies@christchurch.walsall.sch.uk
Mrs C Green	Education Welfare Officer	cheryl@instill-excellence.com
????	Local Authority	????
Miss Smith	Pastoral Manager	tsmith@christchurch.walsall.sch.uk
Mrs Morris	Attendance Support/Admin	smorris@christchurch.walsall.sch.uk

Responsibilities of the School Attendance Officer:

The Attendance Officer works closely with all members of the pastoral team. The pastoral team each have a very specific role to play in supporting the school to maintain high levels of attendance. The Attendance Officers' essential purpose is to support parents and carers to meet their responsibilities for ensuring that their children regularly attend the school at which they are registered and to support school to develop effective systems for managing attendance.

4. Expectations

At Christ Church, we value achievement of every kind and believe that we all respond well to having high expectations placed upon us. These expectations cannot be met if students do not attend regularly or are persistently late. School seeks to be proactive when dealing with attendance issues, as students have

the right to a quality education and to learn without disruption. Students also have the responsibility to be punctual to school and consistently demonstrate respect to staff and students in their lessons.

One day's absence is 5 lessons missed, 3 days is 15 lessons missed and taking 5 days off will be 25 lessons missed. Every lesson missed leads to gaps in students' knowledge and this can be detrimental when it comes to taking their exams.

Parents/carers must:

- Not let their children take time off school for minor ailments, particularly those which would not prevent you from going to work e.g. headache, period pains, sore throat, cough and colds.
- Ensure that if their child is to be absent from school for any unavoidable reason such as sickness, they should contact the school as soon as possible, on the first morning of absence. This may be done by phone, email, through the school text system, by letter or in person.
- Ensure their children understand the importance of good attendance and punctuality and the links between good attendance and good attainment.
- Not authorise their child's absence as only the school can do this on the explanation provided by the parents. Parents need to be aware that a letter containing a written explanation does not in itself authorise an absence. Should a parent fail to provide a satisfactory reason for absence, the school will record such absence as unauthorised.
- Avoid making medical/dental appointments for their children during school hours.
- Ensure that their child arrives every day and on time to school, by 8.55am every morning.
- Not book family holidays during term-time. The school reserves the right to request that the Local Authority issue a penalty notice in such case.
- Take an interest in their child's education. For example, ask about schoolwork and encourage them to get involved in school activities.
- Discuss any problems they may have at school and let their teacher or senior leaders know about anything serious or where you feel we can support.

Family contacts details:

To allow us to safeguard children it is important that parents/carers provide the school office with their current contact details and provide at least two, and preferably three, other contact numbers of trusted adults in case of emergency where possible.

Pupil's must:

- Ensure that they attend school regularly.
- Ensure that they attend school on time (arrive at school by 8.55am).
- Have their attendance and punctuality acknowledged by the school.

All pupils should be aware of the importance of regular school attendance.

Processes for managing attendance

Registration:

In accordance with the legal guidelines, (Education [Student Registration] Regulations 1995) students are registered twice a day. This data is made available to interested parties for their scrutiny, e.g., Local Authority (LA), Department of Education (DfE). On each occasion, we will record children's attendance using the national codes. (For details of current national attendance codes see [School attendance guidance May 2022 Gov. uk](#).)

Registers will be taken promptly at 8.55am, and pupils are allowed to enter the classroom from 8:45am. If a student is not in their class by 9:00am, a late mark will be recorded. If a pupil continues to arrive late to school parents will be contacted to discuss any problems or challenges to their child's punctuality.

It is the responsibility of the parent/carer to inform the school of a pupil's absence and to inform school of any changes to contact details. Parents/carers are asked to contact the school before 9:30am on **EACH** day that their child is absent and inform school when their child is likely to return. The school does not accept ill or unwell as a reason for absence as these definitions are too vague a description of what is ailing the student. Please state Flu, Cold, Upset Stomach, Chickenpox etc., as these definitions of absence are clearer to track and monitor.

If no contact is made by the parent/carer to school, this constitutes a safeguarding concern. The Attendance Officer will send a truancy text to parents/carers and will try to contact them throughout the morning. If no response is made by parents/carers, the Attendance Officer will alert our Safeguarding/EWO or Welfare Manager who will attend the family home. Not knowing the reason for the student's absence is a safeguarding concern.

When a student absence is below 96% a weekly text will be sent out to parents/carers informing them of their child's percentage attendance and request they avoid further absences. If a student's absence, then drops below 90%, a Letter of Concern will be sent requesting the parents/carers contact school for a meeting to be arranged and parent contract to be implemented.

If no improvement is seen, the decision will be made to unauthorise any further absences unless medical evidence is provided. Further communication and letters will be sent to parents/carers until improvements are made. This may involve a face-to-face meeting where a parental contract may be offered. If there is no further improvement then a referral to the school's Local Authority Attendance Service will be made, where legal action may be taken.

Once referred to the Attendance Service, they will attempt to resolve the situation by agreement. If the situation cannot be resolved and attendance does not improve, the Attendance Service has the power to issue sanctions such as warning letters, 15-day notifications or prosecutions.

Whilst any child may be absent because they are ill, sometimes there can be a reluctance to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best resolved between the school, the parents/carers and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend, it is not beneficial to inaccurately justify their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending school. This will only encourage the child's opinion of attendance not mattering and will usually cause a further deterioration.

5. Absences

An authorised absence is an absence for sickness for which the school has granted leave:

- Consultants' appointment which unavoidably falls during the school day of which the school has received an appointment card or hospital letter. However, the expectation is that students should attend school before or after any appointment.
- Religious observations for which the school has granted leave.
- Family emergency in which the school has granted leave.
- An agreed request for Leave of Absence under exceptional circumstances.

An unauthorised absence is:

- Parents/carers keeping their children off school unnecessarily or without good reason.
- Absences that have not been properly explained and the school has not granted leave.
- Medical evidence has not been provided.
- Arriving late to school after registers have closed or when the late privilege has been removed.
- Unauthorised leave of absence during term time.

Appointments:

School request dental and medical appointments are made outside of school hours as these absences have an impact on your child's attendance, thus their attainment. If a medical appointment is made during school time, the school will expect the pupil to attend before or after the appointment, where possible. These pupils will have to be signed in and out of school by a member of the office team. The Attendance Officer will require proof of the appointment before any appointment is authorised - this can be an appointment card or letter provided before this absence is authorised.

Persistent lateness:

This is defined by the school as students who have five, late to school marks recorded. When a pupil has recorded five marks, this may lead to the privilege of the (L) late code being withdrawn and replacing with the (U) unauthorised late code. Unauthorised codes being recorded could lead to prosecution by

the Local Authority If lateness does not improve, and parents/carers will be requested to attend a meeting in school and a Parental Contract will be offered.

Truancy Call:

This is an automated text messaging service. After registers have been taken at the specified time, a Truancy Call will be activated. A call/text message will be sent to every parent/carer where there is an unexplained absence for their child.

6. Safeguarding

For children at risk of harm or neglect:

Safe and well checks, including home visits will be carried out and recorded. The frequency of home visits will be determined on a case-by-case basis following a risk assessment by the Head Teacher, in consultation with relevant partner agencies.

If all avenues of support have been offered, but severe absence for unauthorised reasons continues, it is likely to constitute neglect and the Headteacher/DSL will consider whether there is a need to refer into children's social care.

The Headteacher will follow local child protection procedures.

However, if a child is in immediate danger or at risk of harm, a referral will be made immediately to children's social care Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and the police as per the school safeguarding procedures.

7. Persistent Absenteeism (PA) and severely absent

A student becomes a 'Persistent Absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the academic year, for any reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we require parents/carers fullest support and co-operation in order to address this. We monitor all absences thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority.

Parental Contracts:

Students and their parents/carers who are approaching being PA will be subject to a Parental Contract. The Contract will be issued by our Attendance Manager/EWO and monitored daily. If attendance fails to improve during this time, a referral will be made to the Attendance and Prosecution Service.

This is a voluntary written agreement between you and the school. Between you, you agree to find ways to improve your child's attendance. If you refuse to sign a contract or you don't adhere to it, it can be used as evidence if the local authority decides to prosecute you.

8. Support and intervention

Whilst having the highest expectations of attendance, Christ Church recognises that the barriers to accessing education are wide and complex, both within and beyond the school gates, and are often specific to individual children and families.

We will take into consideration the sensitivity of some of the reasons for absence and understand the importance of school as a place of safety and support rather than reaching immediately for punitive approaches.

We monitor attendance and punctuality throughout the year and understand that certain groups of children may be more at risk of poor attendance.

We will aim to build strong and positive relationships between Christ Church CE Primary and families. The school will treat all children and parents with respect and dignity, considering circumstances holistically.

Early intervention can prevent poor attendance.

We will, in the first instance, support children and parents by working together to address any in-school barriers to attendance.

Where barriers are outside of the school's control, staff will work with the child, family, and other partners to support them to access any support they may need voluntarily. This may include referrals to services and organisations that can provide support.

When absence intensifies, so will the support provided. Christ Church staff will work in tandem with the local authority and other relevant partners.

Where voluntary support has not been effective and/or has not been engaged with, the Attendance Officer will work with the local authority to put formal support in place e.g., parenting contract or an education supervision order.

Where support would not be appropriate or has not been successful or engaged with, and it is likely to change parents' behaviour, a penalty notice may be issued by the local authority.

The school, working with the local authority may seek to intensify support through statutory children's social care involvement where there are safeguarding concerns, especially where absence becomes severe (below 50% attendance).

The school, working with the local authority, may seek to prosecute parents where all other routes have failed or are not deemed appropriate.

Where a child or family needs support we will endeavor to ensure the best placed person in the school works with them and remains their key point of contact.

9. Role of the Education Welfare Officer

The school has a named Education Welfare Officer (EWO). They have a very specific role to play in supporting a school to maintain high levels of attendance. The EWO's essential purposes are to support parents and carers to meet their responsibilities for ensuring that their children regularly attend the school at which they are registered and to support schools to develop effective systems for managing attendance. The Education Welfare Officer acts in partnership with the school, supporting and reinforcing the school's own efforts. The EWO will:

- Meet with the Attendance Officer (member of the SLT team) regularly to discuss the attendance of pupils at Christ Church CE Primary School.
- Promote partnership between pupils, parents and school over attendance and punctuality
- Work effectively with local partners to help remove the barriers to attendance that go beyond the school gates, including building strong links with local statutory services (including social care, health and police) and the voluntary and community sector.
- Monitor and review registers for individuals causing concerns
- Work collaboratively with the school and parents attempts to improve the attendance of identified pupils
- Liaise with the Attendance Officer (member of the SLT team) about referrals to court of long-term absentees
- Explain the consequences of poor attendance or punctuality to pupils, parents, and carers.
- Refer pupils to other agencies where appropriate being jointly agreed.
- Make home visits and feedback relevant information to the school as required
- To take the necessary steps with individuals referred for poor attendance (attendance meetings or pursue prosecution)
- Annually inspect the schools' registers to ensure that it adheres to the code of practice outlined in the 'Absence and Attendance Codes. Guidance for Schools and Local Authorities' DCSF 2006 and the Pupil Registration Regulations 2006.

10. Attendance incentives

What is an attendance incentive:

It is important to motivate children to attend school. There can be various ways to establish attendance incentives. The incentive concept emphasizes rewarding children for increasing their attendance. Some incentives Christ Church uses are:

- Offering positive comments.
- Recognition for children with the highest attendance (badges, certificates).
- Rewards for high attendance (Reward Trip).
- Inter-school competition of attendance.
- Extra playtime.
- Hot Chocolate Club

11. Children missing education (CME)

The Local Authority (LA) officers with responsibility for CME is **Louise Morris:**
Louise_morris@sandwell.gov.uk.

Children who go missing from education are at significant risk of underachieving, and becoming victims of harm, exploitation, radicalisation or serious violence and/or becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training).

Children who are already known to children's social care, who are on a child in need or child protection plan or in the care of the local authority are additionally vulnerable and in need of robust protection.

Where a child has not returned to the Christ Church for ten days after an authorised absence or is absent from school without authorisation for twenty consecutive school days the child can be removed from the admission register, but only if the school and the local authority have failed, after jointly making reasonable enquiries, to establish the whereabouts of the child. Records of all checks must be kept on the child's file. Taking a child off roll must be seen as a last resort.

This only applies if the school does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the child is unable to attend because of sickness or unavoidable causes.

Before removing a child from the register, the school will make reasonable enquiries, with the local authority, to ascertain the whereabouts of the child, compliant with GDPR, which could include:

- contacting the parent, relatives, and neighbours, using known contact details.
- checking with agencies known to be involved with family.
- checking with the local authority and school from which child moved originally, if known.
- checking with any local authority and school to which a child may have moved .
- checking with the local authority where the child lives, if different from the school's location.
- making home visit(s), if appropriate. **All home visits will be risk assessed before being carried out.**

No member of staff should enter a child's home on their own. 'Doorstep' only visits may be carried out by a lone member of staff if it is safe and appropriate to do so.

Other than in an emergency, staff must not enter a child's home if the parent/carer is absent. Staff should always make detailed records including times of arrival and departure and ensure any behavior or situation that gives rise to concern is discussed with a senior leader.

The school will treat each case on its individual merits and use their judgement, ensuring they have considered all the facts.

12. Elective home education (EHE)

Elective home education is a term used to describe a choice by parents to provide education for their children at home instead of sending them to school full-time.

Whilst many home-educated children have an overwhelmingly positive learning experience this is not the case for all and can mean some children are less visible to services that are there to keep them safe and supported.

DfE guidance for local authorities sets out the role and responsibilities of LAs [Elective home education: departmental guidance for local authorities \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/67222/elective-home-education-guidance-for-local-authorities.pdf) whilst this guidance is primarily aimed at LAs, academies, our attendance staff and those maintaining the school registers, will make themselves familiar with it.

The school will also follow the local authority policy and protocols. [Elective Home Education | Sandwell Council](#)

The decision by parents as to how to educate their child, whether at a school or at home, should be an informed, active, and positive one. It is important that parents obtain sufficient information when making that decision.

Parents who wish to educate their child at home are advised to discuss their decision with the headteacher first. Please contact Mr Davies

The school will ensure they:

- respond positively and constructively.
- take all necessary steps to resolve any issues in school that may be influencing parents' consideration of EHE.
- signpost the parent/carer to the local EHE Team, or the School Admissions team, who will provide further advice and guidance to help the parent to make an informed choice.

13. Alternative provision

All professionals have a statutory responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. The tracking and reporting of attendance at alternative provision is an essential component in achieving this.

Children at alternative provision are additionally vulnerable and will be closely monitored. The attendance ambition for children at alternative provision will be the same as they are for any other child.

The senior leader with responsibility for alternative provision is Mr Davies, Headteacher.

Most children at alternative provision will be D coded (dual registered at another school) and the school is ultimately responsible for ensuring their safety and well-being, including home visits when necessary i.e., in the case of non-attendance.

The arrangements for monitoring of attendance, contacting of parents and carrying out safe and well checks will form part of a written individual plan, agreed with the child, parents and alternative provider before the child begins their placement.

Alternative providers are required to contact the school on the first day by 10am whenever the child is absent.

Attendance at off-site alternative provision will be monitored daily, by Mr Davies who will ensure that swift action is taken when a child does not attend their alternative provision place.

The school will make regular visits to the alternative provision to meet the child, their link tutor and to check on their well-being, attendance and academic progress.

The senior leader with responsibility for alternative provision will ensure arrangements are in place to formally monitor, report on attendance at alternative provision to SLT on a weekly basis, liaising with the DSL, SENCo, Mental Health Lead, LAC coordinator or other key colleagues as necessary.

Children whose attendance falls below the school's target will receive support and intervention in line with this policy. The school will work jointly with the alternative provision to put in place a comprehensive, regularly reviewed, written plan to support better attendance.

There is an expectation that any safeguarding concerns are raised with the designated safeguarding lead and that all alternative providers adhere to the child protection and safeguarding policies held by the school.

14. Suspensions and permanent exclusions

All incidents where a child is sent home due to poor behaviour, will be coded on the register as an exclusion, even if pre-agreed with a parent, i.e., children being sent home during lunch times. If an exclusion is for part of the day (including lunchtime), it will be noted as a half day exclusion. All exclusions count as an absence.

Safeguarding

Whilst a child is excluded from school, parents have a duty to ensure that their child is safe and well and appropriately supervised at home.

A child must not be present in a public place during school hours throughout the exclusion period, unless there is reasonable justification for this. Parents may be liable to prosecution and/or receive a penalty notice from the local authority if their child is present in a public place during school hours during the dates of the exclusion. It will be for the parent to show reasonable justification.

The Headteacher will take account of their legal duty of care when sending a child home following an exclusion.

The school will continue to ensure regular safe and well checks are completed. This is particularly important for additionally vulnerable children.

Following a permanent exclusion, safe and well checks will be carried out until the result of any appeal is known.

15. Use of data to target attendance

In line with ***Working together to improve school attendance***, Christ Church's governing board will regularly review and discuss attendance data to challenge school leaders and help them focus improvement efforts on the individual pupils, and cohorts, who need it most. They will also work with school leaders to develop a comprehensive plan to improve attendance; this will be evaluated and reviewed regularly at meetings.

Termly Full Governing Body Meetings will discuss:

- current and historical trends in attendance across their school to identify common issues and barriers.
- pupil cohorts which, historically, have had poor attendance – for example:
 - pupils who have a social worker.
 - are from a background or ethnicity where attendance has historically been low.
 - have a long-term medical condition.
 - special educational needs.
 - a disability.
 - are eligible for free school meals.

- Governors will attempt to carry out benchmarking with comparator schools.

Daily attendance data will be shared through the schools automated collection through the school's management information system which provides staff with easy-to-use attendance reports. Attendance reports and data will be shared with all parents at least once a year.