

This policy should be read and understood in with reference to the following documents:

- Education Act 1996
- Single Equality Policy
- Child Protection Policy
- [School attendance – Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities \(November 2016\) \(Appendix 1\)](#)
- [School attendance parental responsibility measures \(Statutory guidance for local authorities, school leaders, school staff, governing bodies and the police – January 2105\) \(Appendix 2\)](#)
- Local Authority Attendance Policy (June 2017) including Appendix E – Penalty Notice Code of Conduct (Appendix 3)
- Penalty notice for unauthorised leave of absence during term time – Information to Parents and Carers (September 2016) (Appendix 4)
- Leave of Absence Request Form (Appendix 5)
- Form CME1 – referral re ‘Child Missing from Education’ (Appendix 6)

Policy Statement:

- Education prepares children for life, is precious and is a right to which every child is entitled.
- Regular attendance is an essential foundation for raising pupil attainment. Absence from school can seriously disrupt pupils’ continuity of learning. Not only do they miss out on taught lessons, but many children find it difficult to catch up when they return to school.
- The school is committed to equality of opportunity for all its pupils and will work alongside pupils and parents to enable all children to maximise their attendance and their access to the curriculum.
- Without regular attendance, a child cannot be expected to realise their potential, nor will they be able to participate confidently alongside their peers.
- The Governing Body of the school expects all staff to place high priority on punctuality and attendance by pupils in partnership with parents.

Aims of this policy

- To ensure that children and young people make the best use of their educational opportunities by attending school regularly, punctually and in a state of readiness for learning.
- To set out the legal framework and to explain the roles and responsibilities of the Local Authority (LA) and the Education Welfare Service (EWS)
- To ensure that everyone within the school community understands their responsibilities in promoting excellent attendance and punctuality.
- To outline procedures for parents when absence is unavoidable.
- To outline procedures for parents when requesting an ‘authorised absence’.
- To outline procedures for the school when absence is not explained.
- To outline procedures for the school when a child’s attendance / lateness is a cause for concern.

The Legal Framework

- This policy is written in the light of guidance from the DfE ‘School Attendance: Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities’ (November 2016) which in turn is informed by national legislation and therefore reflects the school’s statutory duties. It also reflects the guidance contained in the Wiltshire LA Attendance Policy (Revised June 2017)

- The school recognises the responsibilities of the Educational Welfare Service and supports them in the discharging of the statutory duty of the Local Authority in respect of non-attendance at school.
- Under section 7 of the Education Act 1996, parents must ensure their children are educated. For most parents/carers this means registering their child at a school and ensuring their regular attendance. Failure to do so can result in the issue of a Penalty Notice or being prosecuted.
- By law schools are required:
 - To take an attendance register twice a day: at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon
 - To report to the LA pupils who fail to attend regularly or who are absent for ten school days or more without known reason
- By law the attendance register must show for every session, whether a pupil is present, absent, attending approved educational activity or unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.
- Authorised absence is where the school has given approval in advance for a pupil of compulsory school age to be away, or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as a satisfactory justification for the absence. All other absences are unauthorised.

Roles and responsibilities

1. Responsibilities of parents/carers:

General responsibilities:

Under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996, parents/carers who have chosen to have their child educated at school have a legal responsibility to ensure their child's regular attendance.

This means:

- to work in partnership with the school to take an active interest in their child's school career, to reinforce school policies/arrangements on homework, behaviour and approach to learning, to attend parents' evening and other meetings where necessary
- ensuring that their child arrives at school on time (not before **8.40am** and not after **9.10am**) and that they are collected on time (**details of collection times if they differ e.g. in Primary between Key Stages**)
- ensuring that their child arrives appropriately dressed and in a 'condition to learn' (i.e. not too tired or too hungry)
- to avoid arranging medical or dental appointments during school hours
- where there are problems with attendance and punctuality, parents/carers are expected to work in partnership with the school, and any other agencies (as appropriate) to help to resolve the problems relating to non-attendance and
- to acknowledge receipt of the school's Attendance Policy

Procedures for reporting absences:

- In the event of illness or any other reason for absence, parents/carers will telephone the school office before 9.00am on the first day of the absence.
- Parents/carers should provide an explanation for the absence, which should then be confirmed in writing when the child returns to school.
- If the absence is to continue for more than one day, parents/carers should telephone the school on subsequent days, again before 9.00am, unless they are able to give an exact length of time on the first day of absence. There is a dedicated messaging service to report absences that can be accessed 24 hours a day. It is also possible to report an absence by email to absence@christchurch.wilts.sch.uk
- Parents/carers need to inform the school if a child's absence is due to some traumatic event which the school needs to deal with sensitively so that the school can respond appropriately to the emotional needs of the child on their return to school.

- Where the school has not been notified of a child's absence, parents/carers will be telephoned to confirm that a child is absent and the reasons for that absence.
- Where the school has not been notified and it is not possible to contact parents/carers to establish the reason for absence, the school is obliged to mark the child's absence as 'unauthorised'.
- Parents/carers should ensure that they sign their child in or out if they arrive at school outside normal hours or are taken out of school before the normal end of the day, giving the reason for lateness or early withdrawal from school. This book is kept in the main school office.
- Parents are asked to ensure that their child is fully aware of the procedures they must follow in the event that they are late for school

Procedures for requesting 'authorised absence' from school

- Parents/carers must seek permission from the Head Teacher (or authorised representative) by submitting a written application in advance of any request for leave of absence. This could be for the purpose of a family holiday or family occasion, such as a wedding or funeral or for any other reason. Each request will be considered individually and should meet the circumstances of being 'exceptional'.
- Inevitably there will be occasions when absence is unavoidable or justifiable, these will include:
 - illness
 - bereavement
 - medical/dental appointments
 - days of religious observance
 - visits to other schools (secondary transfer, entrance exams)
 - education at another establishment (e.g. referral unit)
 - approved sporting activity / performance
 - annual family holiday in exceptional circumstances
- Where an absence is unavoidable or unplanned, then parents/carers are asked to follow the procedures for reporting absences as outlined above.
- Where an absence is for anything else apart from an annual holiday (in exceptional circumstances), the school needs to be informed in writing.
- Where a request for absence is for a holiday in term time parents/carers need to complete an 'Absence from School' form (Appendix 5), which is available from the school office or can be downloaded from the school's website. Forms need to be handed into the school office **at least 5 working days in advance** so that they can be processed.

Responsibilities of the School

- The Head Teacher is responsible for ensuring that the policy is effectively implemented and communicated to parents/carers and for improving and maintaining good attendance.
- The school will ensure that all parents/carers are made aware of this policy through looking on the school website.
- **The Senior Management Team/Designated member of staff** is responsible for developing coherent whole school systems for improving attendance including supportive interventions involving other agencies if necessary. The member of staff with particular responsibility for monitoring attendance is Claire Hann-Perkins.
- The Admin Assistant responsible for attendance and absence will ensure that data is monitored and circulated regularly and liaises with the Head Teacher, the Deputy Head Teacher and the EWS on any attendance issues causing concern. Agreed procedures will be implemented by the team for pupils whose attendance falls below 90%.
- Teachers are responsible for ensuring that an accurate register is taken at the designated time. All teachers challenge lateness and set high standards of punctuality themselves.
- Where any follow up action is taken by teachers, tutors or heads of year, accurate records must be kept and copies placed on individual pupil records.

THE LA CODE OF CONDUCT ALSO ADVISES THAT YOU INCLUDE YOUR 'PROCEDURES FOR RE-INTEGRATION FOLLOWING A LONG PERIOD OF ABSENCE INCLUDING HOW TO CATCH UP ON MISSED WORK

Responsibilities of the Governing Body

- The Head Teacher will ensure that the school's attendance figures are reported to the Governing Body/Committee who will monitor progress against annual attend targets and will in turn report figures to the Full Governing Body (once a year)

Concerns over attendance, punctuality and 'unauthorised absences'

- Early identification is crucial and communication with parents/carers needs to begin as soon as the problem is detected. Initial concerns will either be communicated in person, by phone or by letter (if in person or by phone this should be followed up by a letter), explaining the actions that might be taken should the problem persist and seeing if the school can offer any support to the parents/carers to resolve the problem.
- We will make every effort to work constructively and sympathetically with parents/carers to respond to their individual circumstances.
- Where appropriate, the school may request that the parents/carers enter into a 'parenting contract' which sets out what is expected of the parents/carers, pupil and school.
- The school is obliged to report any concerns regarding attendance (including persistent late arrival) and absence to the EWS.¹
- The Local Authority can issue a penalty notice in the following circumstances:
 - overt truancy
 - absence from school, either when a parent continually fails to provide an explanation or the school considers the absence to be avoidable.
 - holidays taken during term time where the absence has not been authorised by the school.
- Penalty Notices are also issued for absence taken during term time where the leave of absence has not been authorised by the school, or an absence has not been requested in advance and the pupil has had a minimum of 10 sessions (5 school days) lost to unauthorised absence during the previous six months in the academic year up to and including the day the Education Welfare Service is notified.
- A Penalty Notice can also be issued to the parent/carer of an excluded child in the event that their child is present in a public place during school hours on a day which is one of the first five school days of that exclusion or, where the exclusion is for a fixed period of five days or less, any of the days of that exclusion period.

¹ When making referrals the school must use the referral form CME1 – Appendix 6