



# The Orchard Primary School

*Nurture Learn Grow*

## Attendance Policy

| Date      | Review Date |    | GB Committee             |
|-----------|-------------|----|--------------------------|
| Sept 2019 | Sept 2021   | HT | Curriculum and Community |

## **INTRODUCTION**

We believe that children cannot learn if they are absent from school. Therefore, we aim to ensure that all our children take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them and to raise standards by promoting regular attendance and punctuality of pupils.

We are committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all our pupils. We believe high attainment depends on good attendance.

We expect all school personnel to support and promote excellent school attendance by acting as role models and to work hard to provide a learning environment in which all pupils are eager to learn, feel valued and enjoy coming to school. School personnel have a responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and punctuality.

Sometimes a pupil's absence or lateness may not be their fault and in these circumstances it is our policy to be supportive of the child and not to make them feel guilty. Also, at times we may have to give consideration for religious beliefs and individual family circumstances.

We believe it is essential to regularly remind parents of the importance of good attendance and the links to pupil attainment. The Education Act 1996 clearly states that the prime responsibility of parents/carers is to ensure that their children attend school regularly.

We believe truancy is a matter that we treat very seriously as we feel pupils are not only losing valuable learning time but they are putting themselves at serious risk as the school and their parents are not aware of their whereabouts.

We believe it is essential to have a strong working relationship with the Education Welfare Service which provides support for pupils and their families in order to promote good pupil attendance and to reduce truancy.

We are aware that leave of absence can only be granted to a pupil in exceptional circumstances and in authorising a holiday in term time we will take into account the child's attendance record, the child's age, the reason for the trip, the time in the academic year and the employment difficulties that parents face by taking holidays in school holiday time. E.g. parents who are members of the police force may not be able to take family holidays at particular times due to local or national issues or events.

We will exercise a consistent approach and ensure equity for all pupils.

## **Aims**

- To create a culture in which good attendance is accepted as the norm.
- To demonstrate that good attendance and punctuality is valued by the school.
- To maintain and develop effective communication regarding attendance between home and school.
- To work with other schools to share good practice in order to improve this policy.

## **Role of the Governing Body**

The Governing Body will:

- delegate powers and responsibilities to the Headteacher to ensure all school personnel are aware of and comply with this policy;

- promote the importance of attendance and punctuality with all stakeholders;
- ensure compliance with all statutory pupil registration regulations;
- ensure that the attendance policy is carried out;
- ask questions about trends and what is being done to prevent persistent poor attenders;
- monitor termly progress
  - Has attendance improved?
  - Has punctuality improved?
  - Has parental response to absences improved?
- ensure the Headteacher exercises his/her discretionary power to authorise absence in extenuating circumstances for up to 10 days in an academic year between September and July which may include term time holidays;
- ensure the Headteacher does not authorise absence if it is to the detriment of a child's education;
- effective implementation, monitoring and evaluation of this policy

## Role of the Headteacher

The Headteacher will:

- ensure all school personnel, pupils and parents are aware of and comply with this policy;
- create a culture which encourages attendance;
- address all school based causes of poor attendance such as bullying, racism etc;
- undertake the daily monitoring of school attendance by using an appropriate and effective registration system;
- ensure registration is taken at the start of the morning session and at the beginning of the afternoon session;
- ensure school personnel are fully trained in the registration process and with the appropriate categorisation of absence;
- ensure pupils are aware that registration is a significant part of the school day;
- monitor attendance according to gender, age, ethnicity, first language, eligibility for Free School Meals, special educational needs and persistent absentees;
- ensure early intervention in order to prevent absenteeism or truancy and to put in to affect a range of procedures to deal with this problem;
- ensure parents are informed about their child's attendance each term;
- target intervention and support to those children that have been highlighted as poor attenders;
- agenda attendance and truancy at periodic meetings with school personnel;
- work closely with the Education Welfare Service attending meetings as appropriate;
- have in place a system for parents to report a child's absence;
- question any parental explanation for pupil absence if there is doubt as to the validity of the explanation;
- expect an explanation for every absence and if one is not forthcoming then the absence will be categorised as unauthorised;
- report to the Governing Body every term attendance figures and progress in improving attendance
- remind parents of their commitment to this policy;
- meet with parents if they have applied for a holiday during school time;
- ensure school personnel are aware that unauthorised absence is absence without approval from the Headteacher and includes all unexplained absences;
- when considering an application for term time holiday request will consider the:
  - time of year of the proposed trip
  - length and purpose of the holiday

- impact on continuity of learning
- circumstances of the family
- overall attendance of the child

- apply a consistent approach across the school and ensure equity for all pupils;
- promote the importance of attendance during collective worship;
- publicise good attendance during assemblies, newsletters and the termly report to the Governing Body;
- award good attendance certificates to pupils when they have achieved 100% attendance;
- introduce rewards and incentives to encourage punctuality;
- adopt procedures for reintegrating long-term absentees;
- organise training for school personnel on the use and understanding of attendance codes and authorised and unauthorised attendance;
- strengthen links with external agencies who engage with and support families;
- provide leadership and vision in respect of equality;
- provide guidance, support and training to all staff especially on bullying and the needs of vulnerable groups;
- monitor the effectiveness of this policy by:
  - monitoring trends and patterns as highlighted in attendance data
  - achieving results above the national average
  - looking at results from parent, pupil and school personnel questionnaires
- annually report to the Governing Body on the success of this policy.

### **Role of the Attendance Officer**

The Attendance Officer is responsible for:

- implementing the policy with the Headteacher;
- contacting parents if they have not reported their child's absence by 10.00a.m;
- contacting the key worker if a child is on the child protection register and no reason has been given for the child's absence;
- monitoring individual and class attendance on a daily basis;
- keeping the Headteacher informed of attendance figures and trends;
- contacting parents regarding concerns about their child's attendance;
- organising meetings with parents to discuss their child's poor attendance;
- organising meetings between the Headteacher and parents to discuss their child's truancy;
- organising meetings between the Headteacher and parents to discuss their application for a term time holiday;
- ensuring registers are distributed to the teaching staff and are kept up to date.

### **Role of the Education Welfare Service**

The Education Welfare Service will:

- appoint education welfare officers (EWO) who will promote good attendance in schools;
- establish effective working relationships with schools, pupils and parents to ensure educational entitlement and regular attendance;
- ensure pupils attend school regularly;
- investigate reasons for a pupil's poor attendance;
- provide support and counselling for children and their families;
- work with pupils who may be excluded;

### **Role of School Personnel**

School personnel will:

- comply with and implement this policy;
- set an example of punctuality and good attendance;
- ensure registration is taken at the start of the morning session and at the beginning of the afternoon session;
- ensure pupils are aware that registration is a significant part of the school day;
- ensure registers are up to date;
- be responsible for identifying trends in attendance and punctuality by monitoring class and individual attendance patterns;
- inform the school office of any concerns about attendance or suspected truancy;
- emphasise the importance of punctuality and good attendance with pupils and parents;
- discuss individual pupil attendance at parent-teacher consultations.

## Role of Parents

Parents/carers will:

- comply with this policy;
- work as partners with the school in the education of their children;
- ensure their children of compulsory school age receives suitable full-time education;
- ensure their children are punctual and know the importance of good attendance;
- inform the school on the first day of absence;
- inform the school of any changes to their contact details;
- collect their children on time
- take part in periodic surveys conducted by the school;
- avoid taking family holidays in term time;
- be aware that the Headteacher when considering an application for a term time holiday request will consider the:
  - time of year of the proposed trip
  - length and purpose of the holiday
  - impact on continuity of learning
  - circumstances of the family
  - overall attendance of the child
- be aware that where parents fail to seek permission for time off then the absence will be treated as unauthorised;
- be encouraged to take an active interest in their child's work and to take an active role in the life of the school by attending:
  - parents and open evenings
  - parent-teacher consultations
  - class assemblies
  - school concerts
  - fundraising and social events
- encourage effort and achievement;
- encourage completion of homework and return it to school;
- provide the right conditions for homework to take place;
- expect their child to hand in homework on time;
- join the school in celebrating success of their child's learning;
- support the school to ensure smooth running of the school.

## **Role of the Local Authority**

The Local Authority may prosecute a parent for not ensuring their child attends school regularly or may issue or apply for:

- Penalty Notice
- Education Supervision Order
- Parenting Order
- School Attendance Order

The Local Authority should:

- provide training on the understanding and analysing attendance data and clear guidance on the correct use of attendance codes;
- analyse attendance patterns in order to improve pupil attendance especially those from vulnerable groups;
- make schools more aware of national priorities, initiatives and available grants in order to improve pupil attendance;
- try to identify why there is a variation in the use of attendance codes between schools;
- share good practice within the Local Authority and should identify and explore good practice in other Local Authorities.

## **Role of Pupils**

Pupils are responsible for:

- knowing the value of good attendance;
- knowing the seriousness of attending school each day
- accepting sanctions if they are caught playing truant;
- returning to school after a period of illness;
- support the school Code of Conduct and guidance necessary to ensure the smooth running of the school;

## **Dealing with Trends in Attendance**

When there is a pattern of poor attendance then the following procedure will take place:

- Parents are invited to attend an informal meeting with the Attendance Officer and Attendance Support Officer to explain their child's repeated absence.
- Support will be given if there are underlying reasons for the absence.
- If not, then the situation will be monitored for improvement.
- If there is no improvement then referral will be made to the EWO who will take the appropriate action.

## **Dealing with Lateness**

The office personnel monitor lateness and inform:

- the Head of patterns of lateness;
- parents of the school's concerns and arrange a meeting so that the problem can be addressed
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## Dealing with Truancy

If a pupil is thought to be playing truant then the school will immediately inform:

- the parent / carer;
- in some circumstances the school will also inform the EWO and / or the police

All truants will receive:

- sanctions;
- support;
- discussions with the Attendance Support Officer or Headteacher to understand the seriousness of the matter;
- a programme of monitoring and support

The Police must be informed immediately if a pupil leaves school without prior permission.

## Absence

**Holidays during term time** – parents are encouraged to take a family holiday not in term time. Leave of absence only allowed in exceptional circumstances. Parents are asked to complete a holiday form requesting permission to take their child on holiday and a meeting with the Headteacher is arranged. At this meeting the Headteacher will explain that:

- term time leave is not authorised;
- there is a risk of the child losing their place if s/he does not return when parents say they will return;
- there is a risk of a Fixed Penalty Warning Letter or a penalty fine issued by the Local Authority.

**Religious Observance** – a maximum of three days absence is allowed for religious observance.

**Medical, Dental or Hospital Appointments** – we encourage these appointments to take place out of school time in order not to disrupt the child's education.

## Monitoring the Effectiveness of the Policy

The policy will be reviewed every 3 years or when the need arises by the Headteacher and Curriculum and Community committee of the Governing Body.

Any necessary recommendations for improvement will be presented to the Governing Body for further discussion and endorsement.