

Whitchurch Church of England Primary School		Effective Date:	May 2023	
Policy and Procedure Statement				
Attendance		Policy	Revision Date:	May 2025
			Page No:	1 of 11
			Review:	Every 2 years
Head Teacher		Mrs C Pritchard		
DSL		Mrs C Pritchard		
Chair of Governors		Mrs J Fisher		

Jesus said, 'Love your neighbour as yourself' (Matthew 22:39)

Whitchurch Vision Prayer

Lord God, together we make a difference through love, courage and respect. With kind actions, words and thoughts we accept everyone for whom they are and care for those in need. Help us learn well with curiosity and confidence. Our world is your creation and we will cherish it. Amen

Whitchurch Values

Together we make a difference through love, courage and respect.

Section 1:

Rationale / Statement of Intent:

For a child to reach their full educational achievement a high level of school attendance is essential.

At Whitchurch CE Primary School it is our vision to provide an education of the highest quality for all our pupils and endeavour to provide an environment where all pupils feel valued and welcome. Parents and pupils play a part in making our school so successful. Every child has a right to access the education to which he/she is entitled. Parents and teachers share the responsibility for supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and punctuality for all.

It is our duty to consistently strive to achieve a goal of 100% attendance for all children. Every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and their parents or carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance.

For our children take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered it is vital they are at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. The routines children develop around attendance and punctuality at school are the same as the expectations of any future employer in the world of work. High attainment, confidence with peers and staff and future aspirations depend on good attendance.

Good attendance is important because:

- Statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and absence below 95%
- Regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically
- Regular attenders find school routines, school work and friendships easier to cope with
- Regular attenders find learning more satisfying
- Regular attenders are more successful in transferring between primary school, secondary school, and higher education, employment or training

Section 2:

2.1 Promoting Good Attendance & Punctuality

Promoting Good Attendance

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents and the child. The Home/School agreement will contain details of how the school will work with parents and the expectations of what parents will need to do to ensure their child achieves good attendance.

School will:

- Provide information on all matters related to attendance in our weekly School Matters (newsletter).
- Report to parents on how their child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainments;
- Work directly with parents whose children have poor attendance or punctuality

2.2 Roles and Responsibilities:

Responsibilities of the School's Attendance Leader (Head Teacher)

The Head Teacher will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure the Attendance Policy is consistently applied throughout the school. She will also ensure that attendance is both recorded accurately and analysed. She will ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to deal with any difficulties.

If absence is frequent or continuous, except where a child is clearly unwell, staff will discuss with parent/carers the need and reasons for their child's absence and will encourage them to keep absences to a minimum. A note or explanation from a pupil's home does not mean an absence

becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence **will always rest with the school.**

Responsibilities of Classroom Staff:

- Ensure that all students are registered accurately
- Promote & reward good attendance at all appropriate opportunities.
- Liaise with the Head Teacher on matters of attendance and punctuality
- Communicate any concerns or underlying problems that may account for a child's absence.

Responsibilities of Pupils:

- Attend every day unless they are ill or have an authorised absence.
- Arrive in school on time.

Responsibilities of Parents and Carers:

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is a parent/carer's legal responsibility (section of the 1996 Education Act) and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law.

Parents are expected to:

- Inform the school by 9.30am on the first day of absence.
- Discuss with the Head Teacher any planned absences well in advance.
- Support the school with their child in aiming for 100% attendance each year.
- Make sure that any absence is clearly accounted for by phone or text on the first and subsequent days of absence, or by letter if a phone is unavailable.
- Avoid taking their child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments.
- Only request for leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance
- Ensure their child is registered at the Reception Desk if they are late or if they are leaving the school site during school hours.

Section 3:

3.1. Recording Attendance:

Legally the register must be marked twice daily. This is once at the start of the school day 9:00am and again for the afternoon session at 12:45pm for Early Years, 1:00pm for Key Stage 1 and 1:15pm for Key Stage 2.

3.2. Lateness /Punctuality

It is important to be on time at the start of the morning and afternoon school sessions and to lessons. The start of school/lessons is used to give out instructions or organise work. If children are late they can miss work, time with their class teacher getting vital information, cause disruption to the lesson for others, and may become embarrassed which may lead to a reluctance to attend

school. The school day begins at 9:00 am and all pupils are expected to be in school at that time.

Morning registration closes at 9:00 am.

- All lateness is recorded daily. This information will be required by the courts, should a prosecution for non-attendance or lateness be necessary
- Arrival after the close of registration will be marked as unauthorised absence code 'U' in line with county and Department for Education (DfE) guidance. This mark shows them to be on site, but is legally recorded as an absence.
- If a pupil is late due to a medical appointment, they will receive an authorised absence coded 'M'. Please be advised that where possible doctors and dentists appointments are to be made outside of school hours or during school holidays.

Pupils who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of the other pupils. On-going and repeated lateness is considered as **unauthorised absence and will be subject to legal action** (see section 6 for further detail).

Parents, guardians or carers of pupils who have patterns of lateness will be contacted to discuss the importance of good time keeping and how this might be achieved. If lateness persists, parents, guardians or carers will be invited to attend the school and discuss the problem and support offered. If support is not appropriate or is declined and a child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence due to lateness recorded in any 10 week period the school or the Hampshire County Council will be required to issue parents with a penalty notice in accordance with Hampshire's Code of Conduct for issuing penalty notices for non-attendance (See section 6 of this policy for further detail).

Collection at the end of the school day

Children should be collected promptly at the end of the school day. Where late collection is persistent and/or significantly late, the school is obliged to take any uncollected pupil to a place of safety and share concerns as necessary with other agencies. If a space is available, the school will place the children into the after school club and provide the parent/carer with the bill.

3.3 If a child is absent

First Day Absence

A child not attending school is considered a **safeguarding** matter. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

Parents must:

- Contact school as soon as possible on the first day of absence. Parents can leave a message on the school phone, or email adminoffice@whitchurch.hants.sch.uk

If there has not been any parent contact, then the school will:

- Telephone or text parents on the first day of absence. If no contact can be made, school staff will visit the child's home to ensure the child and parent are safe.
- If this is a school absence is a regular occurrence, parents will be invited into school to discuss the situation with the Head Teacher.

- Refer the matter to the Hampshire's Attendance Legal Panels if absence is unauthorised and falls below 90%.

If contact cannot be made:

If a child is not seen and contact has not been established with parents or any of the named parent/carers that day then school will start a child missing in education procedure as set down by Hampshire County Council Guidance. School will make all reasonable enquires to establish contact with parent/carer including making enquires to known friends, wider family.

Ten Day's Absence

School has a legal duty to report the absence of any pupil who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days. If the child is not seen and contact has not been established with the named parent/carer then the Local Authority is notified that the child is 'at risk of missing'. Children's Services Staff will visit the last known address and alert key services to locate the child.

Continued or Ongoing Absence

If a child misses 10% (3 weeks / 21 sessions) or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason, they are defined as **persistent absentees**. Where this absence is authorised the school will invite parents to a meeting to start an Attendance Plan.

It is important to note that children are dependent on their parents/carers to ensure they attend school regularly and on time. School will not make children feel uncomfortable for poor attendance when it is not their fault.

Section 4:

Request for Leave of Absence:

(Pupil registration) (England) regulations state that Head Teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. It is important to note that Head Teachers can determine the length of the authorised absence as well as whether absence is authorised at all. The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, or unavoidable which means the event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. **There are no rules on this** as circumstances vary from school to school and family to family. There is however, no legal entitlement for time off in school time to go on holiday **and in the majority of cases holiday will not be authorised.** Parents/Carers wishing to apply for leave of absence need to fill in an application form available from the School Office in advance and before making any travel arrangements.

If term time leave is taken without prior permission from the school, the absence will **be unauthorised** and if the number of sessions absent hits the thresholds set down in Hampshire's Code of Conduct parent/carers will be issued with a fixed-penalty fine, or other legal action in accordance the code (see section 6 for detail).

Taking holidays in term time will affects children's schooling as much as any other absence. Parents are asked to support the school ensuring their child has good attendance.

Section 5:

Understanding types of absence – Authorised & Unauthorised:

Pupils are expected to attend school every day for the entire duration of the academic year, unless there is an **exceptional reason** for the absence. There are two main categories of absences:

- Authorised Absence: is when the school has accepted the explanation offered as satisfactory justification for the absence, or given approval in advance for such an absence. If no explanation is received, absences cannot be authorised.
- Unauthorised Absence: is when the school has not received a reason for absence or has not approved a child's leave absence from school after a parent's request. This includes:
 - parents giving their children permission to be off school unnecessarily such as for shopping, birthdays, to look after siblings
 - truancy before or during the school day
 - absences which have not been explained

A school can, if needed, change an authorised absence to an unauthorised absence and vice versa if new information is presented. Any changes will be communicated to parents/carers. An example of this would be where a parent states a child is unwell but on return to school there is evidence they have been on holiday.

Section 6:

Penalty Notices for Non Attendance and other Legal Measures:

In Education law, parents/carers are committing an offence if they fail to ensure the regular attendance of their child of compulsory school age at the school at which the child is registered, unless the absence has been authorised by the school.

Legal Measures for tackling persistent absence or lateness

Hampshire Schools and Hampshire County Council will use the full range of legal measures to secure good attendance. Legal measures will only be considered through a referral to Hampshire's Attendance Legal Panels where:

1. **The child or family do not require the support from any agency to improve the attendance**
2. **The child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence and parents are complicit in the child's absence.**

The following legal measures are for pupils of compulsory school age who are registered at a school:

- Parenting contracts set at Education Planning Meetings
- Parenting orders

- Penalty notices
- Education Supervision Orders
- Prosecution

Legal Measures for absence taken when the Head Teacher has declined parent/carers request for leave of absence

Where a pupil has unauthorised absence due to either:

1. non approval of a parent/carer's request for leave of absence or
2. a holiday that has been taken without permission **and the unauthorised absence is for 10 or more sessions (5 days) in any 100 possible school sessions then a penalty notice for non-attendance will be issued**

Where a child has **unauthorised absence** the school must enforce Hampshire's Code of Conduct for issuing Penalty Notices or follow its guidance on other Legal Measures for Non-Attendance. The Code of Conduct is a statutory document that ensures that powers for legal sanctions are applied consistently and fairly across all schools and their families within the authority. A copy is available from <http://www3.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/attendance-guidance-for-parents/possible-penalties.htm>

Each penalty notice carries a fine of £60 if paid within 21 days of the penalty notice being posted. If the fine is not paid within 21 days the Penalty is automatically increased to £120 if paid within 28 days. If the fine remains unpaid the Hampshire County Council will consider prosecution for the non-attendance. Payment methods are detailed on the Penalty Notices themselves. Penalties are to be paid to Hampshire County Council and revenue resulting from payment of Penalties is used by the County Council to help cover the costs of issuing Penalty Notices and/or the cost of prosecuting recipients who do not pay.

For further information parents/carers can request a leaflet from their school and should visit Hampshire County Councils website at: <http://www3.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/attendance-guidance-for-parents/possible-penalties.htm>

The code of conduct states that:

Schools or Hampshire Local Authority will issue a Penalty Notice for any unauthorised absence where the pupil has been:

- absent for 10 or more half-day sessions (five school days) of unauthorised absence during any 100 possible school sessions – these do not need to be consecutive
- persistently late (coded *U*) for up to 10 sessions (five days) after the register has closed
- persistently late before the close of the register (coded *L*), but the school has met with parents and has clearly communicated that they will categorise as unauthorised any further lateness (code *O*), and where the threshold of 10 sessions (five days) has been met
- absent for any public examinations of which dates are published in advance

- absent for any formal school assessments, tests or examinations where the dates have been published in advance unless the issuing of a Penalty Notice would conflict with other intervention strategies in place or other sanctions already being processed.

If a child's has unauthorised absence meets any of the above criteria and the family or child do not require any agency support to improve the attendance then a single Penalty Notice is issued for either:

- 1. 10 sessions of unauthorised absence or lateness in any 10 week school period**
- 2. 1 or more sessions of unauthorised absence during a public exam, formal school assessment of testing where dates are published in advance.**

Parents and Carers will be warned of the likelihood of a penalty notice being issued for unauthorised absence either via a letter, through the leave of absence request form, or through the school's attendance policy and website. The penalty notice is a fine that is issued to each parent/carer who condoned (or was responsible for the child) during the period of unauthorised absence for which the fine has been issued. For each case of unauthorised absence the school or Hampshire County Council will decide whether a Penalty Notice is issued **to one or more parent/carers** for each child. **N.B** This could mean four penalty notices for a family with two siblings both with unauthorised absence for holiday i.e. one PN for each child to each parent

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Section 7:

7.1 How parents can encourage children to attend school?

School Refusals

Children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse.

Parents should contact their child's class teacher immediately and openly discuss their worries. A child could be avoiding school for a number of reasons – difficulties with school work, bullying, friendship problems, family difficulties. It is important that the reasons are identified and families and school work together to tackle the problem. In some cases it may find it helpful to discuss the circumstances with another professional.

Preparing children for school

Parents can support their child by ensuring that:

- they get enough sleep
- they get up in plenty of time in the morning and have a good breakfast
- they leave for school properly dressed and with the right equipment
- showing an interest in what they are learning in school, how they are getting on with their friends or generally about school

7.2 Leavers

Parents of children who are leaving Whitchurch C E Primary for another school other than transferring to secondary school are asked to:

1. Provide a letter to the Head Teacher giving comprehensive information about their plans including any date of a move and the new address and telephone numbers, the child's new school and the start date when known.
2. If pupils leave without the above information, then the child is considered to be a 'Child Missing in Education'. This requires schools and Local Authorities to then carry out investigations to try and locate the child, which includes liaising with Children's Services, the Police and other agencies.

7.3 Absence through child participation in Public Performances, including theatre, film or TV work & Modelling.

Parents of a child performer can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in a performance. They must contact the Head Teacher to discuss the nature and frequency of the work, whether the child has a valid performance licence and whether education will be provided by the employer during any future leave of absence. Any absence recorded as part of a child's participation in a public performance is recorded as C an authorised absence.

7.4 Absence through competing at regional, county or national level for Sport.

Parents of able sportsmen and women can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in a regional, county, national and international events and competitions. It is however, down to the Head Teacher's discretion whether to authorise this and they will wish to discuss with you the nature and frequency of the absence and how learning will continue if absence occurs. Permission for your child to leave early or arrive late to attend coaching and training sessions are also at the discretion of the Head Teacher and are not likely to be approved if it is a regular event, unless the sports club or association are providing an education tutor as part of their coaching.

7.5. Gypsy Roma Traveller Showman and Showman families

Absence of a child from a traveller family that has left the area may be authorised if the absence is for **work purposes only** and it is believed that the family intends to return. To ensure the continuity of learning for Traveller children, dual registration is allowed. That means that a school cannot remove a Traveller child from the school roll while they are

travelling. When the Traveller is away the home school holds the place open and records the absence as authorised through the T code. Distance Learning packs for traveller children are not an alternative to attendance at school

Section 8: Record preservation

School registers are legal documents. The school will ensure compliance with attendance regulations by keeping attendance records for at least 3 years. Computer registers will be preserved as electronic back-ups or microfiche copies.

Appendices

The Law

The Education Act 1996 Part 1, Section 7 states:

The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable-

- [a] To his age, ability and aptitude and
- [b] To any special needs he may have.

either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

For educational purposes the term parent is used to include those that have parental responsibility and/or those that have the day to day care of the child.

The legislation that appertains to children who are of compulsory school age and are registered at school is contained within this Act.

Part V1 Section 444 contains the details of when an offence is committed if a child fails to attend school.

Register and Admission Roll keeping.

The legal requirements are found in: The Education [Pupil Registration] (England) Regulations 2006

Guidance documents on attendance.

The following DfE documents are used to guide attendance recording.

Absence and Attendance codes (Guidance for Schools and Local Authorities)

Keeping Pupil Registers (Guidance on applying the Education Pupil Registration Regulations)

These and other guidance documents are available on the DfE website

Hampshire County Council Guidance is available on Hantsweb at

<http://www3.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/lba-resources-for-schools/atten-guidance/attendance-guidance-for-schools.htm>

Elective Home Education Hampshire Inclusion Support Service