



OLDBURY ON SEVERN CHURCH OF ENGLAND VC PRIMARY SCHOOL
'Love one another as I have loved you' (John 15:12)

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Rationale

Pupils' learning is at the heart of everything we do, but children cannot learn if they are absent. We therefore aim to ensure that our children take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them and raise standards by promoting regular attendance and punctuality of pupils. We have therefore adopted the following policy and procedures in consultation with governors, parents, pupils and staff.

Objectives

- To improve attendance and punctuality
- To reduce the level of unauthorised absence and increase the level of complete weeks
- To create a culture in which good attendance is accepted as the norm
- To demonstrate that good attendance and punctuality is valued by the schools
- To develop and maintain effective communication regarding attendance between home and school

The Education Act 1966

The Education Act states that parents have the primary responsibility for ensuring that children receive a suitable education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. It is the responsibility of the Local Authority (South Gloucestershire Council) to ensure that parents meet these responsibilities. Attendance enforcement is usually carried out by an Education Welfare Officer from the FISS (Family Intervention Support Services) team who provide an important link between school and home.

Pupil Registration

The schools are required to maintain two registers:

- An admission register (known as the school roll)
- An attendance register

The admission register shall contain a list of all pupils at the school.

The schools ensure that an attendance register for all pupils is taken twice a day; once at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. For each pupil, the register must be marked either as present, engaged in an approved educational activity away from the school site, or absent. If a pupil is absent, the register must say whether the absence has been authorised by the school.

Authorised or Unauthorised Absence?

Authorised absence is where the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil of school age to be away or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as satisfactory justification for absence. All other absences must be treated as unauthorised.

Responsibilities of Parents

Parents have the prime responsibility for ensuring that registered pupils of school age attend school regularly. If attendance continues to be a problem the school can contact the FISS team / EWO

(Education Welfare Officer) to resolve the problem. The law (from the Education Act of 1996) states that parents found guilty of school attendance offences could be subject to a penalty of up to £2,500 and / or a period of imprisonment of up to 3 months, or alternatively the LA could recommend that a parenting order be enforced.

School procedures

Any pupil who is absent from school must have their absence recorded as being authorised or unauthorised. Only the head teacher or a member of staff acting on their behalf can authorise requested absence.

Lateness

Morning registration will take place at the start of the school day – 9.00am. Afternoon registration will take place at 12.50pm. Any pupil arriving after the closure of registration will be recorded as late (L code). If a pupil arrives after 9.30am, the session will be recorded as unauthorised absence (U code). If your child is late due to a medical appointment this will be marked accordingly. Where children are regularly late, ie after 9.10am or 1pm, the school will write to the parents informing them of the school's concerns and offering support to help rectify the situation. If lateness is persistent and parents have not responded to support from the school, then a referral will be made to the Education Welfare Officer. A penalty notice can be issued for unauthorised lateness.

First Day Absence

Parents are expected to contact the school by 9.00am on the first day of an absence. Where this does not happen, the school will contact parents/carers by telephone. If there is no response from telephone calls, this will be followed with a text message. Class teachers are initially responsible for ensuring that the office is made aware when pupils are absent. The school office will then call home by 10.00am if there has been no reply to the text message and check on the reason for absence. This information will then be recorded and, when necessary, passed to the relevant professional.

Ten Days' Absence / Children missing in education

It is the school's duty to report children missing in education (CME), which links to our Safeguarding Policy. If a child is, absent for more than three consecutive days (without an explanation given) it is our duty to contact the Local Authority in order to access support services to locate a child.

Any pupil who is absent, without an explanation, for 10 consecutive days, will be referred to South Gloucestershire's Education Welfare Service. This is a legal requirement. The schools will include details of actions that have been taken.

Frequent Absence

It is the responsibility of everyone in the school community to be aware of, and bring attention to, any emerging attendance concerns. In cases where a pupil begins to develop a pattern of absences, the school will try to resolve the problem with the family. If this is unsuccessful, the school will refer to the School Nurse, if the problem appears to be medical, the Education Welfare Officer or other agencies.

Frequent Medical Absence

The school will discuss with the School Nurse those pupils who frequently miss days for medical reasons. Where necessary, a medical note may be asked for to evaluate the pupil's health and educational needs and an individual Health Care Plan may be required. Parents could be asked to provide evidence from their doctor regarding recurring illness.

Attendance Monitoring

The school monitors the attendance of all pupils on a weekly basis. Where the school has identified that a pupil's attendance has fallen in any term and / or below the level of 95% with 3+ broken weeks, a standard letter 1 will be issued to home. This will make them aware of the school's concerns and the importance of consistent attendance at school. If there is no subsequent improvement in a pupil's attendance in four weeks, a request will be made for a meeting with the parents and, when necessary, the Education Welfare Officer. The purpose of this meeting will be to share our school's expectations and try to ensure that the pupil's attendance improves. Support and advice will be offered where necessary. Support through the vehicle of a SAFeh (single assessment for early help) may be offered. If a pupil's attendance continues to cause concern, a standard letter 2 of referral will be sent to the Education Welfare Officer. The school will endeavour to work with and support all pupils and families, whenever possible.

Holidays in term time

Regulation 7 of the 2006 Regulations has been amended to prohibit the proprietor of a maintained school from granting leave of absence to a pupil except where an application has been made in advance and the proprietor considers that there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application.

"The local authority strongly urges parents not to take their children out of school for family holidays. Under these regulations a Headteacher can agree to a holiday in term time ONLY where there are 'exceptional circumstances'. No holiday should be agreed unless the Headteacher is satisfied that there are such exceptional circumstances." (LA Guidance Notes 2013). It should be noted that leave is not authorised for annual family holidays.

Parents should complete an 'Application for permission for a child to be absent from school' form and return it with a detailed letter addressed to the headteacher explaining the exceptional circumstances for the request. A discussion with the headteacher would be helpful before a request for absence in exceptional circumstances is made. If absence is requested outside these exceptional criteria it would not be authorised.

When a holiday is taken and the school has not authorised the absence, the school will request that the Local Authority issue a penalty notice if more than 10 sessions of unauthorised absence accumulate in a rolling seven-week period. There are two sessions per day, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. The fine is £60 (per parent, per child) if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 if paid within 28 days. For example, a two-parent family taking 2 children out of school for an unauthorised holiday would be liable for a total of £240 if paid within 21 days or £480 if paid between 21 and 28 days.

If the parent has not paid the Penalty Notice in full before the 28 days allowed, the local authority is required to commence legal proceedings in the Magistrates' Court for the original offence of failing to ensure a child attends school. If found guilty under Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act, the parent could receive a fine of up to £1,000 or other sentencing options available to the court.

Attendance Targets: This year the target is 96%

We take opportunities to maximise positive impacts for disabled and non-disabled people, people of different ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds, girls, boys, men and women.

D Dix,

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