Church Vale Primary
ATTENDANCE POLICY
September 2026-2027

Rationale

We expect all children on roll to attend every day, when school is in session, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so. We do all we can to encourage the children to attend, and to put in place appropriate procedures. We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is the development of a positive attitudes towards school. To this end, we strive to make our school a happy and rewarding experience for all children. We will also make the best provision we can for those children who, due to ill health, are prevented from coming to school.

Under the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1995, the Governing Body are responsible for making sure the school keeps an attendance register that records which pupils are present at the start of both the morning and the afternoon sessions of the school day. This register will also indicate whether the absence was authorised or unauthorised.

School Attendance

Going to school regularly is important to your child's future. Children who miss school frequently can fall behind with their work and do less well in school.

Good attendance shows potential employers that your child is reliable. Research suggests that children who attend school regularly could also be at less risk of getting involved in antisocial behaviour or crime.

The law

By law, all children become compulsory school age at the beginning of the first term following their 5th birthday. Once a child is of compulsory school age children must receive a suitable full-time education. For most parents, this means registering their child at a school. However, some choose to make other arrangements to provide a suitable, full-time education.

Once your child is registered at a school, you are legally responsible for making sure they attend regularly. If your child fails to do so, you risk getting a penalty notice or being prosecuted in court.

Definitions

Authorised Absence · An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or guardian. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent writes a note or telephones/messages the school to explain the absence. Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised. For example, if a parent takes a child out of school to go shopping during school hours, this will not mean it is an authorised absence.

Unauthorised Absence - An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the Headteacher or the parent has failed to notify school as to the absence. All holidays are automatically unauthorised.

Arrival and Registration

- All children should be ready to come into school at **8.45am**. The register is taken twice a day and counts as 2 sessions.
- Morning registration ends at **8.55am**. If a child arrives after the registration period, he / she will be marked in as late. After **9.15am** this will become an unauthorised absence.
- It is essential that children arriving and leaving school with a parent / guardian outside the normal hours are signed in or out from the office. The signing in / out system in the office is used in case of an emergency or a fire drill.
- School ends at **3.15pm.** Children will not be released early unless there is a good reason given.
- Nursery times are **8.45**- **11.45am.** Then the afternoon sessions are from **12.15-3.15pm** again, registers close ten minutes after session start time.

Illness and Medical Appointments

- Every effort should be made to arrange medical appointments outside school hours. If it is necessary for a child to be out of school for this reason, the child should be returned to school directly after the appointment. The appointment letter or card should be shown to the office as proof of the appointment.
- The school office should be informed of any illness absence on every day the child is off. Parents can leave messages on the answer phone, can also message through messenger or on the App and can ring the office from 8.30am. It is the parent's responsibility to contact the office to inform them of

absence. If we do not manage to make contact, we will record the absence as unauthorised. This could lead to a penalty notice.

If a Child is Absent

- When a child is absent, the class teacher will record the absence in the register.

- The school office will endeavor to contact the parent or guardian, if no message has been received regarding the reason for the absence.

- Parents are, however, expected to message, email or telephone the school by 9.00a.m. on the morning of the day of absence to inform the school that their child will be absent. They are asked to state a reason.

- If there is any doubt about the whereabouts of a child, the class teacher should take immediate action by notifying the school office. The school will then be in contact straight away with the parent or guardian, in order to check on the safety of the child.

Absence

Authorised Absence

If your child is ill or unable to attend school for some reason, you should contact the school by phone to notify them. Depending on the reasons for absence, the Head Teacher will decide whether the absence can be authorised or not. Where absence is sickness related schools may require medical certification, especially if the illness last for 3 days. On day 3 we will ask for medical evidence as standard. Medication with the dispensing label, texts of appointments and letters will all count as medical evidence.

Unauthorised absence

Absence from school is likely to be recorded as unauthorised absence when:

- there is no parental explanation
- the school is not satisfied with the explanation for an absence.

In either of these situations, parents/carers could face prosecution.

Head Teachers are no longer permitted to agree a Leave of Absence during term time unless in exceptional circumstances. This includes where parents decide to take their children out of school for a family holiday during term time. If a parent intends to take their child out of school for a leave of absence during term time, they must have requested this in advance and had their request agreed by the Head Teacher. Failure to do this could result in a fine or prosecution.

Holidays

No holidays are permitted to be authorised at all unless there are exceptional circumstances. Exceptional circumstances will be decided on a case-by-case basis. For example, a funeral or wedding may be authorised for 1 day. If more is taken, then they will be unauthorised.

No exceptional circumstances will be granted retrospectively.

Parents are strongly urged to avoid booking a family holiday in term time.

Examples of What May Constitute an Exceptional Circumstance

- To have a short absence to attend a family wedding or funeral. This will normally be 1 day granted. If abroad will be 3 days authorised.
- To attend parent's graduation 1 day authorised

To have a week's winter or summer holiday in school time, because the cost is cheaper during term time, does not constitute as an exceptional circumstance.

Long term absence

When children have an illness that means they will be away from school for over five days, the school will do all it can to send material home, so that they can keep up their schoolwork. Parents will be required to provide medical evidence in this instance unless they have been advised by the school to stay off longer. for example, in the case of chicken pox (this may go over 5 days). School will always adhere to guidelines provided by the UKHSA.

If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school will contact the support services.

- The LA has the right to consider taking legal action against any parents or guardians who repeatedly fail to accept their responsibility for sending their children to school on a regular basis.

Lateness

Ongoing lateness can also impact attendance significantly. This can be treated as an unauthorised absence if the lateness is beyond 9.15am (or 12.45 for the afternoon nursery). They often miss interventions and setting up the day with their class if they are late often.

If a parent believes that the reason for their child's unauthorised leave of absence from school in term time was not properly understood and that it should have been considered as exceptional by the Head teacher then the parent needs to have that discussion directly with the school.

The local authority cannot overturn a Head Teacher's decision to unauthorise a pupil's absence from school during term time.

Support

Support From school

School will take the attitude of 'support first'

Your child's school is the first place to go to discuss any attendance problems. If your child starts missing school, there may be a problem you are not aware of. Ask your child first, then approach their teacher or form tutor.

The school should try to agree a plan with you to improve your child's attendance. If you don't follow the plan and things don't improve, the school will take further action.

When you child's attendance drops below 95% you will be sent a letter, so you are aware. If at this point you wish to bring anything specific to light with the school, please do so.

If attendance drops further (below 90%) you will be offered a meeting with the school to discuss what your barriers are to good attendance. At this point you will need to show medical evidence when your child is off otherwise it will be recorded as unauthorised.

A referral to outside agencies will be offered at this point, which could be Early Help or Targeted support. These agencies will explore with you how to get your child back into school more frequently.

Other avenues of support

Nottinghamshire County council can also help if you are struggling to ensure that your child goes to school. Potential forms of support include:

Healthy Families Team

https://www.nottinghamshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/healthy-family-teams/

Family Services

- telephone: 0115 804 1248
- email: early.help@nottscc.gov.uk
- Details of local support services can be found within:

- Notts Help Yourself
- Nottinghamshire Pathway to Provision

Notice to Improve

A Notice to Improve is a final opportunity for a parent/carer to engage in support and improve attendance before a penalty notice is issued. If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate but offers of support have not been engaged with by the parent or have not worked, a Notice to Improve should usually be sent to give parents a final chance to engage in support. A Notice to Improve does not need to be issued in cases where support is not appropriate and an authorised officer can choose not to use one in any case, including cases where support is appropriate, but they do not expect a Notice to Improve would have any behavioral impact (e.g. because the parent has already received one for a similar offence).

Improving School Attendance Contracts

An attendance contract is a formal written agreement between a parent and either the school and/or local authority to address irregular attendance at school or alternative provision. An attendance contract is not legally binding but allows a more formal route to secure engagement with support where a voluntary early help plan has not worked or is not deemed appropriate. An attendance contract is intended to provide support and offer an alternative to prosecution. Parents cannot be compelled to an improving attendance contract, and they cannot be agreed on in a parent's absence. There is no obligation on the school or local authority to offer an attendance contract, and it may not be appropriate in every instance, but an attendance contract should always be explored before moving forward to an education supervision order or prosecution. In order to put in place an improving school attendance contract, a meeting should be arranged with the parent(s)/Carer(s) and the pupil wherever possible. The meeting should:

• explain the purpose of an attendance contract and why using one would be beneficial in the family's circumstances,

• Provide parent(s)/carer(s) the opportunity to outline their views on the pupil's attendance at school, any underlying issues and what type of support they think would be helpful to secure the pupil's regular attendance. Where a parent fails to attend the meeting without good reason or notification, further attempts should be made to contact them and arrange another meeting. If the parents do not engage then this will be recorded as support offered.

Fines and Prosecution

If you still decide to take your child out of school, you may incur a penalty notice which now has a cumulative effect:

If your child is absent for 10 sessions (2 sessions per day) over a 10-school week rolling period. Or have 10 unauthorised sessions. This could be from not letting us know, being later that 9.15am, not presenting medical evidence when asked or the child and parent saying different things. This will incur a penalty notice.

Penalty notices are £160 (or £80 if paid within 28 days) per parent per child. For the first occurrence. If there are further unauthorised absences, then a second penalty notice can be issued but you will not get the option to pay within 28 days for a reduction.

Only 2 penalty notices can be issued in a rolling 3-year period. If a parent has already had 2 penalty notices they are escalated to the enforcement team for legal action.

Appealing against a Penalty Notice Fine

There is no right of appeal against an Education Penalty Notice once it has been issued correctly and in line with the Nottinghamshire Code of Conduct.

Penalty Notice fines can only be withdrawn in specific circumstances as set out within the national regulations and the local code of conduct.

Rewards for Good Attendance

There are special certificates/rewards for any child who has 100% for a whole year/term which will be awarded in the final assembly of the term. A reward will be given each term to the class with the best overall performance (e.g. additional playtime). This will happen half termly.

Monitoring, Reviewing and Responsibilities

- It is the responsibility of the governors to monitor overall attendance.
- The Governing Body also has the responsibility for this policy, and for seeing that it is carried out.
- The Governors will therefore examine closely the information provided to them and seek to ensure that the school's attendance figures are as high as they should be.
- The school will keep accurate attendance records on file for a minimum period of three years.
- Working with school leaders to set goals and outline areas for support and challenge.

Governors are responsible for thoroughly examining recent and historic trends and patterns. Benchmarking against comparator schools within the local authority, region and nationwide. Paying particular attention to pupil cohorts and to groups that face entrenched barriers to attendance (this should be specific to the school's context but may include vulnerable groups such as pupils who have a social worker, are from a background or ethnicity where attendance has historically been low, have a long-term medical condition, have special educational needs or disabilities or are eligible for free school meals)

The Head Teacher/senior leaders are responsible for monitoring the day-to-day attendance trends and to talk to parents where there are concerns. This may also include:
• In school meetings with parents,
• Home visits
•Evidence of referrals for support to other agencies,
• Letters to parents,
• Evidence of Reasonable Adjustments,
• Attendance panel meeting notes,
• Chronology of contact with the family,
• Copy of a Parenting or Improving Attendance Contract or multi-agency support plan

Class teachers will be responsible for monitoring attendance in their class. If they become aware of an unexpected pupil absence during the course of the school day, they will contact the school office immediately. If there is a longer-term general worry about the attendance of a particular child, this will be reported to the Headteacher, who will contact the parents or guardians.

Teaching assistants will be responsible for talking to the children of concern about why they aren't coming to school and to record the conversation and the 'child's voice'.

The office administrator will be responsible for collecting the information from parents, keeping the systems up to date. Sending out letters to warn and inform. Sending out to parents and the local authority the fixed penalty notices.

The school attendance champion is the Head teacher.
The Governor for attendance in Jane Berney

This policy was formulated with the Nottinghamshire working together to improve attendance toolkit

Updated 2024) following on from parliamentary changes.

J Yardley

Review September 2027