



## **Church Lane Primary School and Nursery** **Attendance Policy** **May 2017**

### **Introduction**

This is a successful school and your child plays their part in making it so. We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to reach out for excellence. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and your child should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

It is very important therefore that you make sure that your child attends regularly and this Policy sets out how together we will achieve this.

### **Why Regular Attendance is so Important:**

**Learning:-** Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

**Safeguarding:-** Your child may be at risk of harm if they do not attend school regularly. Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility and within the context of this school, promoting the welfare and life opportunities for your child encompasses:-

- Attendance
- Behaviour Management
- Health and Safety
- Access to the Curriculum
- Anti- bullying

Failing to attend this school on a regular basis will be considered as a safeguarding matter.

### **The Law relating to attendance**

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that '*the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him / her to receive efficient full time education suitable to age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs he/ she may have Either by regular attendance at school or otherwise*'

### **The Law relating to safeguarding**

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities and governing bodies to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and students under the age of 18.

#### Statement of intent:

The school aims to work together with parents/Carers to ensure that children of compulsory school age attend both regularly and punctually. Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, pupils and all members of school staff.

#### Understanding Types of Absence

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This type of absence can lead to Sleaford Church Lane consulting the LA to use sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed.

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If your 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 usually make things worse.

#### Parents/Carers responsibilities:

- Parents/Carers have a legal duty to ensure that children of compulsory school age attend on a regular and full-time basis.

- Parents/Carers should ensure that, if their child is to be absent from school for any unavoidable reason such as illness, they should contact the school by 9.00am on the first morning of absence and on subsequent days of absence. This must be done by telephone on 01529-302696 (includes leaving a message on the absence line) or in person. Verbal messages on the parent's behalf from an adult relative or representative such as a childminder or friend may be accepted at the school's discretion on the first day of absence –

subsequent absences must be explained by the parent. Verbal messages from children, e.g. siblings, will not be accepted.

Parents may not authorise their child's absence – only the school can do this, on the basis of the explanation provided by the parents. Should parents fail to provide a satisfactory reason; the school will record such absences as unauthorised. In some cases, this may be retrospective and authorisation may be withdrawn should circumstances arise leading the school to decide that the reason given was not truthful. If this occurs, this will be discussed with the parent.

- Parents should ensure that their child arrives on time for the start of registration (8.45am). Children arriving after 8:55am should report to the front office and speak directly to the Attendance Officer or Headteacher who will record reasons for lateness.

- Parents should avoid booking family holidays during term-time. Such holidays will not be authorised. Children in Year 2 & 6 MUST NOT take time off in May each year; this is a very important time for those years due to SATS.

#### School responsibilities:

The school will record and monitor attendance in accordance both with the statutory requirements and with the principle that regular, uninterrupted attendance is vital to a child's educational progress and personal wellbeing.

Registers will be taken twice daily (at 8.45am and 1pm). Any child arriving after the close of the registration period will be recorded as "late" for that session.

Teachers will complete registers in accordance with guidance given by the Head teacher. The Head teacher will inspect registers weekly in order to ensure that they are being satisfactorily maintained and to identify any potential attendance problems at an early stage.

Should a class teacher have any concerns about a child's attendance and punctuality, the Head teacher must be informed. This can be done in person or via email. If the Head teacher/Attendance Officer has particular concerns regarding a child's absence/wellbeing and no message has been received by the parent/carer, the Head Teacher (or appropriate staff member in the Head teacher's absence) and the Attendance Officer may visit the home by 10.15am on the first day of absence. Other agencies may be informed/consulted if deemed necessary.

Should a child be absent, the class teacher will enter the child as absent on the register. It is the Attendance Officer's responsibility to use the correct code for the absence. If no explanation has been received, the Attendance Officer will speak to the class teacher first and if there is still no explanation the Attendance Officer will endeavour to make contact with the parent.

If there are any absence notes from parents they should be dated and initialled by the class teacher and returned to the office with the register, where they will be stored. Only notes regarding absences where there are concerns need be brought to the attention of the Head teacher, who may then choose to speak to the parents.

The Head teacher will regularly collect attendance data and use this during meetings with the Attendance Officer. These meetings will agree on attendance thresholds and targets and will identify tasks and follow-up actions for both the school and the Attendance Officer. Other agencies, such as Children's Services and Educational Welfare Officer (EWO) may also be involved.

Church Lane Primary School and Nursery will employ a number of strategies to promote regular attendance, including: appropriate personal encouragement for particular children; termly and annual certificates and prizes.

#### Persistent absentees:

Persistent absentees are defined as children whose attendance is below 85% and where unsatisfactory reasons are given for absence. However, the procedures outlined below may apply to children whose attendance is above 85% but where there are concerns about deteriorating attendance or where patterns are emerging,

e.g. regular absences on particular days or persistent lateness.

All of the above policy applies to persistent absentees, with the following additions:

- Children's names are highlighted in the Absence File in the front office.
- Any messages received regarding absence of these children are recorded on Integris.
  
- If no message is received, either the office staff or Head teacher must be informed and must attempt to contact the parent at the earliest opportunity. If no contact is made or the message received is unsatisfactory a home visit will be conducted on the first day of absence. The Educational Welfare Officer (EWO) and other agencies may be informed/consulted if deemed necessary.

#### Church Lane Primary School and Nursery Target:

The school has targets to improve attendance and your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets.

The minimum level of attendance for this school is 95% attendance and we will keep you updated regularly about progress to this level and how your child's attendance compares.

Our target is to achieve better than this however because we know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling and we believe our pupils can be amongst the best in the County.

Through the school year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made.

Information on any projects or initiatives that will focus on these areas will be provided in our Home - School Newsletter and letters sent home to individual parents/carers and we ask for your full support.

### Summary

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend.

All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible and that every child's welfare and life opportunities are promoted.

### **Appendix 1 – First Day Contact Guidelines**

First day contact is a widely used practice in schools and has been shown to improve attendance rates. The correct procedure at Church Lane is as follows:

1. As soon as the registers are returned to the office, the Attendance Officer checks absentees against messages received via letter, email from teacher or via school absence line.
2. For persistent absentees, see the relevant section above. For other pupils for whom no message has been received, the Attendance Officer will attempt to make contact with the parent at the earliest opportunity.
3. When contact is made, the parent will be asked for the reason for absence. In the event that no proper reason is supplied, the parent will be informed that the absence will not be authorised.
4. In the case of minor ailments, the parent will be encouraged to send the child in with an assurance that school will keep a close eye on him/her. *(NB – if there has been a spate of certain symptoms in the school or community, such minor illnesses may be treated as a valid reason for absence).*
5. Where no contact is made, a message should be left asking the parent to contact the school. Where it is impossible to leave a message, a letter should be sent following this up. In this instance a home visit may be conducted before 10am on the first day of absence by the HT and the Attendance Officer.
6. Reasons for absence are then added to the register.

## Appendix 2 – requesting leave of absence in special circumstances

Regular school attendance is essential if children are to maximise their educational opportunities. Interruptions in school attendance disrupt continuity of learning and have a negative impact on attainment.

It is the school's responsibility to provide the best education possible. We can only do this if child/ren attend regularly. There is a direct correlation between achievement and attendance.

The Government's guidance states that only under **special circumstances** may the Head teacher consider giving permission for a child to be absent from school for a maximum of 10 days in any one school year. In line with national and local guidance the school would like to outline clearly when permission will **not** be granted:-

- During transition time as a pupil is settling into the school.
- Before or during Year 6 SATs or important revision periods leading up to these.
- If the pupil has attendance **below 95 %**.
- If the pupil already has unauthorised absences.
- **From September 2013, the school will not authorise requests for term-time holidays even when the above criteria do not apply.**

Section 444(A) of the Education Act 1996 empowers the local authority to issue Penalty Notices for failure to ensure regular school attendance. **Parents or carers who take their children on holiday in term time without school's permission or are late returning from an extended holiday, may receive a Penalty Notice fine of £60 per parent per child, which must be paid within 28 days.** If payment is made after 28 days but within 42 days, the penalty is increased to £120. Where a fine remains unpaid after 42 days, the matter will be referred to the County Solicitor, who will consider instigating criminal proceedings.

**Please note that Penalty Notices can be issued after 10 unauthorised absences in a 12-week period – this is 10 registration periods, i.e. 5 days. Children who are late without good reason after registration closes (9.00) also receive an unauthorised absence mark. The 2007 regulations also set out the procedures for issuing Penalty Notices (fines) to each parent who fails to ensure their children's regular attendance at school or fails to ensure that their excluded child is not in a public place during the first 5 days of exclusion. Parents must pay £60 if they pay within 28 days or £120 if they pay within 42 days.**

## **Guidance for Parents and Carers (FIXED PENALTY NOTICES)**

### **School attendance and the law**

Section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 gives powers to the Local Authority to issue penalty notices where a parent/carer is considered capable of but unwilling to secure an improvement in their child's school attendance.

#### **Why has it been introduced?**

Increasing school attendance is a key priority nationally and locally because missing school damages a pupil's achievement chances, disrupts school routines and the learning of others and can leave a pupil vulnerable to anti-social behaviour and youth crime.

**Above all, missing school seriously affects children's longer term life opportunities.**

#### **What is a penalty notice?**

Under existing legislation, parents/carers commit an offence if a child fails to attend regularly and the absences are unauthorised by school. Depending on circumstances such cases may result in prosecution under section 444 of the education act 1996. A penalty notice is an alternative to prosecution, which does not require an appearance in court whilst still securing an improvement in a pupil's attendance?

Payment of a penalty notice enables parents to discharge potential liability for conviction.

#### **What are the costs?**

Payment within 28 days of receipt of a notice is £60 and £120 if paid after this period but within 42 days. This payment is per parent, per child.

#### **When are they used?**

Lincolnshire considers that regular attendance at school is of such importance that penalty notices may be used in a range of situations where unauthorised absence occurs:

- Overt truancy (including pupils found during truancy sweeps)
- Inappropriate parentally condoned absence
- Excessive Holidays in term time or excessive delayed return from an extended holiday without prior school permission
- Failure to return to school on the agreed date (may also result in your child losing their school place)
- Persistent late arrival at school (after the register has closed)

In every case (a pupil will have had a minimum of 20 % of school sessions lost to unauthorised absence during the current half term or ten consecutive days of unauthorised absences before a Penalty Notice is considered.

The Authority never takes such action lightly and would far rather work with parents/ carers to improve attendance without having to resort to any enforcement actions. Attendance is of such importance to all of us however that the authority will use the powers if this is the only way of securing a child's schooling.

**Is a warning given?**

In most instances, you will receive a written warning of the possibility of a Penalty Notice being issued. This will include details of your child's absences and will tell of the period of time during which an improvement is expected. In that time your child must have no unauthorised absences from school.

**Is there an appeal process?**

There is no statutory right of appeal once a notice has been issued, but on receipt of a warning you can make representation should you wish.

**How do I pay?**

Details of payment arrangements will be included on the penalty notice. You need to be aware that payment in part or by instalment is not an option with penalty notices.

**What happens if I do not pay?**

You have up to 42 days from receipt to pay the penalty notice in full, after which the authority is required under the act to commence proceedings in the Magistrates court for the original offence of poor attendance by your child.

**Can I be prosecuted if I pay the Penalty Notice but my child is still missing school?**

Not for the period included in the Penalty Notice – payment discharges your liability in this respect. However it may be the case that a prosecution might be considered for further periods of poor attendance not covered by the notice, depending upon the circumstances. If this is an issue, it is vital that you work closely with your child's school and support agencies.

**Can I get help if my child is not attending regularly?**

It is very important that you speak with the school at the earliest opportunity if you have any worries at all about your child's attendance.

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Appendix 3:

TRAFFIC LIGHT MONITORING SYSTEM

SCHOOL STRATEGIES / INITIATIVES

These strategies are proven and attendance at another school that implemented them found their attendance level rise from 89% to 96%

- ❖ High profile attendance board highlighting 95% - 100% attendees
- ❖ Certificates given at assembly by the Attendance Officer each half-term for attendees with 95% - 100% attendance
- ❖ Class prize for full 100% attendance at the end of the school year
- ❖ Attendance weekly draw for 100% attendees (Small prize)

TRAFFIC LIGHT SYSTEM

Everyone receives a copy of our attendance policy when they join the school and this can also be found on our website.

Attendance officer reviews reports on a weekly basis

- Attendance 95% or above NO ACTION
- Below 95% AMBER LETTER SENT OUT with new target

**WAIT FOUR WEEKS**

- Target met - NO FURTHER ACTION and letter of congratulation letter sent out
- Target not met - RED LETTER SENT OUT with new target
- New cases below 95% AMBER LETTER SENT OUT with new target

**WAIT TWO WEEKS**

- Target met – NO FURTHER ACTION and letter of congratulation letter sent out
- No improvement Panel Meeting set with Head teacher, Attendance Officer and Education Welfare Officer

**Agreed by:** Callum Clay

**Date agreed:** May 2017

**Review date:** May 2018