



# St Nicholas C of E (VC) Primary School

*'Love your neighbour as yourself.'* Matthew 22:37



## Attendance Policy

### Policy Statement and Rationale

St. Nicholas C of E (VC) Primary School recognises that excellent education is vital to the lives of all children and to our society as a whole. Whilst it is known that the life chances of children may not be equal from the outset of their lives for various reasons, education can help to redress this imbalance and help to ensure that every child has the chance to fulfil their potential.

Regular attendance is an essential foundation of raising pupil attainment. Absence from school can seriously disrupt pupils' continuity of learning. Not only do they miss out on taught lessons, but many children find it difficult to catch up when they return to school.

In addition to the above, we also understand that poor or irregular attendance places children at risk and in some cases can result in them being drawn into patterns of anti-social or criminal behaviour.

We fully support and promote a partnership approach to supporting children and families in sharing responsibility for maintaining good school attendance; working with parent/carers, the Local Authority and other professionals in offering guidance and assistance.

Regular attendance is key to raising attainment and is underpinned by our school's Christian ethos and core values; **Relationships Enjoyment Aspiration Courage Hope**

### Aims of the Attendance Policy

This policy aims to:

- Ensure that children and young people make the best use of their educational opportunities by attending regularly, punctually and in a state of readiness for learning
- Emphasise a commitment to promoting excellent attendance and punctuality
- Ensure that everyone within the school community understand the issues and procedures for attendance
- Fulfil the statutory duties in relation to school attendance
- To encourage good attendance through parental awareness of the benefits and children's motivation to attend.

### Attendance: The Legal Framework – roles and responsibilities

The law says that ensuring a child receives education is a parent/carer's legal responsibility (Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act). For most parents this means registering their child at a school. Permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law and parents/carers who do not secure their child's regular attendance at school may be issued with a Penalty Notice or referred to the Wiltshire Education Welfare Service for prosecution in the magistrates' court.

To avoid this happening we will work with parents and carers to address irregular or poor attendance to ensure full-time attendance.

Authorised absences are those that have been agreed by the Head teacher.

Unauthorised absences are those where no valid reason has been provided for absence

or

those absences which the Headteacher has received a request but has not agreed this.

## **Partnership Working**

### **The School's Roles and Responsibilities:**

- The Head teacher undertakes to improve and maintain good attendance
- The Head teacher is responsible for maintaining the attendance profile through assemblies, staff meetings, monitoring, registration process, target setting across year group, liaison with the EWO, parent/carer contact and school attendance meetings.
- Class teachers (in liaison with the Head teacher) maintain accurate registration, follow up notes, parent/carer contact if agreed, target setting for class/individual pupils
- Appoint a nominated Governor with specific responsibility for attendance who will monitor attendance and the actions taken by school staff to encourage good attendance.
- Administrative staff are the first point of contact for parents reporting a child's absence.

### **The Parent/Carer's Roles and Responsibilities:**

Do you know these facts about absence and attendance?

95% equates to half a day off every two weeks in a school year

90% equates to a day off every two weeks in a school year

85% equates to one and a half days off every two weeks in a school year

80% equates to one whole day off every week in a school year

A secondary age pupil whose attendance is 80% will have missed ONE WHOLE YEAR of education by the time they leave school

“Better attendance at school by pupils improves their educational achievements and, in turn, their lives and prospects. Even a small reduction in absence would result in many pupils receiving greater benefit from their education.” The National Audit Office.

At St Nicholas CofE VC Primary School attendance is the business of everyone in our school community. The governors and all staff are committed to supporting all pupils to achieve excellent attendance and regularly review school procedures and strategies to support this.

We expect that parents and carers will work with us if school absence becomes a concern.

Parents and carers can help to promote positive attendance by:

- Parents/Carers ensure their child arrives at school on time, appropriately dressed and in a 'condition to learn' (i.e. not too tired or too hungry)
- Works in partnership with the school to help their child(ren) gain an appreciation of the importance of attending school regularly
- Works in partnership with the school to take an active interest in their child's education
- Works in partnership with the school and other agencies (as appropriate) to resolve

problems relating to non-attendance or which may have a negative impact on their child's attendance

Pupils also have a responsibility to make sure they follow school procedures made known to them for receiving their registration mark, in particular when arriving late.

## **Procedures**

*Our school attendance target is: 96%.*

*This means that we are expecting each pupil to have 100% attendance. Pupils who miss just 3 days of school in a school term will contribute to the school not achieving the attendance target set by the governing board*

- Class teachers use an electronic registration system (SIMS) to accurately record daily attendance (a.m. and p.m.)
- The register will remain open for 30 minutes after the school day begins at 8:45, after which children will be marked late
- Class teachers or the Head teacher will discuss persistent or unexplained lateness with parents or carers and identify support strategies to put in place if needed, including support from other agencies if appropriate
- Class teachers (including supply staff) will employ consistent use of the register codes
- Attendance rates will be reported on children's annual reports
- Following a long-term absence staff will ensure a period of re-integration is discussed with parents or carers including catch up of missed work
- Unresolved persistent lateness or absence will be referred to the Education Welfare Service for support and advice.

### ***Parents are asked to:***

***Notify the school when their child is unable to attend, with a reason, on the first and subsequent days of absence. Parents should make contact with school before the start of the school day. Please phone (the absence line/school office/ member of staff on 01380 850 391)***

***Keep the school informed, in cases of ongoing absence. A note from a pupil's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence will always remain with the school***

***Arrange medical or dental appointments outside of school hours unless there is urgent need for an appointment.***

***Tell the school if their child is going to be late, the reason why and expected time of arrival.***

***Only request leave of absence/holiday in term time if it is for an exceptional circumstance. The process for requesting leave of absence is explained further in this policy.***

***Examples of types of absence that are not considered reasonable and which will not be authorised under any circumstances are:***

*Going shopping with parents*

*Birthdays*

*Minding other younger children in the family*

*Staying at home because other members in the family are unwell unless not doing so will breach guidance and legislation relating to COVID-19 (Coronavirus)*

*Day trips and holidays in term time unless there are exceptional circumstances that have been approved by the Head Teacher*

*Arriving at school too late to get a present mark (After the close of registration)*

*Truancy*

*Death of a pet*

We will contact the parent/carer if a child is absent and the parent/carer has not advised that the child will not be in school. Parents can expect contact on every occasion of an un-notified absence. The attendance manager will initially phone parents within 30 minutes of registers closing. If we cannot speak directly with parents/carers then we will make contact with nominated emergency contacts to establish the reason for absence; this is in line with school safeguarding procedures.

If after 3 days of absence, your child has not been seen and no contact has been made with the school, a home visit will be made by school staff, to ascertain the safety and well-being of your child and establish the reason for absence from school.

After 10 days of unexplained absence and no contact with the school, we are obliged to notify the local authority. The local authority will follow their procedures for Children Missing from Education (CME) and parents may expect contact and visits from an Education Welfare Officer to ascertain the well-being and safety of your child.

### **Collecting your child from school**

We ask that all parents/carers ensure that they are able to collect their children from school on time. School finishes at 15:15pm

If parents are unable to collect their child as usual then they will need to communicate the alternative arrangements they have made with the school.

We will not release children in these circumstances to anyone who we have not been advised of. There is a password exchange system in place for children in Holly Class.

### **Monitoring attendance**

Weekly monitoring of the registers will be made by the Attendance Manager, to analyse overall absence for each pupil and identify pupils with low attendance, a pattern of absences that may lead to Persistent Absence (PA), Severe Absence (SA) patterns and levels of broken weeks, lateness, authorised absence and unauthorised absence and reasons for absence.

A pupil is classed as a persistent absentee when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year and as a severe absentee if they miss more than 50% of schooling for whatever reason, whether it be authorised or unauthorised, or a mixture of both. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to a child's educational prospects and we need parents' full support and encouragement to tackle it. PA and SA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system, and we combine this with tracking academic progress to assess the effect on the pupil's attainment. Absence for whatever reason disadvantages a pupil by creating gaps in his or her learning. The Attendance Manager will be responsible for putting in place actions for each pupil of concern. Initially we will try to resolve the problem with parents/carers and this may involve requesting medical evidence in order for the school to authorise any further absence due to ill health and/or an attendance meeting with the Attendance Manager. We may ask parents to agree to a Parenting Contract which details how we will work together to improve attendance. However,

if absence continues the school may make a referral to the Local Authority for interventions that may include penalty notices and court action.

### **Requesting leave of absence in exceptional circumstances**

In accordance with Department for Education guidance, leave of absence from school including for holidays in term-time, may only be authorised in exceptional circumstances.

Parents are required to complete a leave of absence request form which must outline the exceptional circumstances for which the leave has been requested.

Leave of absence request forms must be completed in advance of the dates requested. We require two weeks' notice unless the absence is related to an emergency.

We do not give retrospective agreement for leave of absence so any absence not advised to the school in advance will be unauthorised.

Requests will be considered by the headteacher and parents and carers will be advised of the decision.

Any pupil who has taken a term time holiday will be required to provide medical evidence if they are ill in the period directly before or after the dates advised to school.

Parents/carers will be asked to provide evidence if a pupil does not return to school on the agreed date following a holiday as a result of delayed or cancelled flights or other travel arrangements.

Where an unauthorised leave of absence is taken, parents will be issued with a penalty notice. This will be in the sum of £120 per parent/carer for each child, but is reduced to £60 per parent/carer for each child if paid within 21 days of issue.

### **Consequences of persistent and severe absence**

At St Nicholas CE VC school we will always work with you to address any attendance concerns. If we have been unable to resolve the issue, despite a number of interventions, then we may have to refer you to the local authority.

The Education Welfare Service has a range of actions available which include:

1) The parents/carers may be issued with a penalty notice, which carries a fine of £120, per parent, per child. This is reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days of issue. If not paid at all, court action will be initiated.

2) The local authority may initiate court action under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, which could lead to fines of up to £2,500, imposition of orders such as Parenting Orders or even imprisonment.

3) In some cases, action may be taken under the Children Act 1989 to protect the welfare and development of the child.

### **Home-school procedures are as follows:**

- On the first day of absence parents/carers should ensure that they contact by the school office by phone or email at the beginning of the school day to explain the reason for their child's absence and expected length of absence
- Where appropriate this may be followed up with a written note which gives explanation for pupil absence
- Parents/carers will endeavour to make medical or dental appointments out of school hours where possible
- Parents/carers must seek permission from their child's head teacher (or authorised representative) by submitting a written application two weeks in advance of the proposed absence. This could be for the purposes of a family holiday or family occasion, such as a

wedding or funeral or for any other reason. Each request should be considered individually and should meet the circumstance of being 'exceptional' if authorisation is being considered.

*NB. It is the head teacher's decision to register an absence as either authorised or unauthorised.*

- Parent/carer should inform the school of circumstances which are or may affect their child's attendance at school.

## **Strategies for improving and maintaining good attendance**

Such strategies include:

- All staff will show sensitivity to the needs of individual pupils
- Sensitive discussion with parents/carers regarding possible barriers to good attendance
- Raising awareness of attendance at phase transfers and parents' evening meetings
- Attendance audits which help to identify categories of non-attendance and enable targeting through specific strategies
- Governor involvement in implementing parent/community initiatives
- Pupil involvement/views on procedures and experiences in school which may affect attendance
- Regular attendance data monitoring from which to action plan responses to specific issues
- Links with other policies – bullying, behaviour management, equal opportunities and special needs.

## **Monitoring and Evaluation**

- This policy will be monitored by governors at termly governing body meetings where attendance data will be submitted by the Head teacher
- Data below 96% will be discussed and reviewed with actions planned where appropriate
- This policy will be reviewed every 2 years by the school governing body
- Advice will be sought from other agencies and professionals including the EWO to support the school's strategy of maintaining good attendance.

## **Communicating the contents of the Attendance Policy**

- This policy will be given to all new parents/carers when their child is first registered at the school.
- Parents/carers attention being regularly drawn to the Attendance Policy through school newsletters and other communication
- This policy will be available on the school website
- Aspects of the policy will be raised regularly through school assemblies, staff training events
- This policy will be made known to new staff as part of their induction and to those providing supply cover.

Date of issue:	September 2023
Review Date	September 2024
To be reviewed	Headteacher and Governors
Authorised by	Headteacher