

# Chichester Locality Group of Schools

*Chichester Schools*



*Working Together*



## Attendance Policy September 2015

## **Rationale**

Every child has a right to education and parents are legally responsible for making sure that their child, once enrolled at a school, attends regularly and punctually. Regular attendance at school is the single most important factor in a child/children making appropriate progress and achieving success. Good regular and punctual attendance means doing well academically, developing better relationships with other children and positive behaviour. It also sets up good habits for when young people enter into work and life.

## **Principles**

We recognise that children's learning is affected by their attendance, as we aim to encourage everyone to aim high and try to achieve their full potential. The school provides a warm, welcoming and caring environment, within which everyone is valued and respected.

All school staff work with parents to help their children attend school punctually every day and to thereby meet the legal requirement that all children of compulsory school age attend school on a regular, full-time basis. Every half day absence from school has to be classified by the school as either authorised or unauthorised. This is why information about absence is always required.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason (e.g. illness or educated off-site).

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable (e.g. absences that have not been properly explained) or children who arrive too late to receive a mark in the register.

The school works in partnership with the Education Welfare Service (EWS).

The Governing Body agrees legally required targets for attendance each year.

## **Procedures**

Attendance registers are taken at the beginning of the morning and afternoon sessions and sent to the office for checking by 9.20am. The office staff contact the parents/carer of any child who has an unexplained absence before the end of the session. All absences are treated as unauthorised unless or until the school agrees on a satisfactory explanation. Absence notes are collated by the school office and reasons logged in the Absence Book.

The school applies the following procedures in deciding how to deal with individual absences:

**1. Illness and other legitimate reasons**

If a child is unfit for school, parents / carers are asked to inform the school on the first day of absence before 9.20am. When the child returns, he / she should bring a written note if they have not already texted/ e-mailed the school office with a reason. In exceptional circumstances, further evidence of a child's illness may be requested, such as a doctor's note. Other reasons for absence must be discussed with the school each time. It is not appropriate for the school to authorise absences for shopping, day trips, etc. Leave may be granted in an emergency e.g. bereavement or for medical appointments which take place during school time.

**2. Register codes**

Appropriate codes are entered by the office staff. The Headteacher confirms any disputed codes.

**3. Late arrival**

Children who arrive late to school must report to the school office, and the time of arrival noted on the register. Arrival at the school after 9.30am (30 minutes after the official start of school) is recorded as an unauthorised absence, unless a reasonable explanation is given.

**4. Holiday absence**

The school will not authorise holiday in term time for any year group.

**5. Appointments**

Parents have a responsibility for ensuring that non-urgent medical and dental appointments are outside of the school day whenever possible. In exceptional cases, where this is not possible, parents have a responsibility for ensuring that only part and not all of the school day is missed.

**6. Communication with parents**

If concerns about attendance or punctuality arise, the school will contact the parents/carers to discuss these and agree how this will be taken forward. A case file may be started, comprising documented phone calls, letters, meetings, agreed actions and review dates.

Throughout the year parents will be sent a colour-coded letter linked to cumulative attendance for their child from the start of the academic year, if their child's attendance becomes a concern. Persistent absence is defined by the DfE as attendance below 90%

The school applies the following monitoring procedures:

- **Electronic records**

Attendance of all pupils is recorded electronically using the West Sussex SIMS system. This is up-dated regularly, and used to inform patterns and concerns across the school.

- **Education Welfare Service**

The school works in partnership with the Education Welfare Service, and seeks their advice on issues and matters arising from pupil absence. The initial responsibility to monitor, investigate and improve individual poor attendance lies with the school, and pupil case files will be kept. A referral to EWS will be considered if the child's absence is unauthorised for 25 sessions or more. A "Case Review Checklist", "A6 Referral Form" and a pupil's "Registration Certificate" will form part of this referral.

The attendance advice line (01403 229023) is available for both parents and schools.

The school must notify the local authority (on the number above) if a pupil is absent for ten or more consecutive school days without authorisation. Where this is necessary, the responsibility for any legal action rests with the local authority.

The school in conjunction with the Local Authority is able to issue Fixed Penalty Notices to parents of pupils who have 10 or more unauthorised absences in a 10-week consecutive period.

- **Governing Body**

The Governing Body agree targets for school attendance each year. Issues and concerns may be raised with the Pupils Committee. The attendance policy is agreed by the Pupils Committee and reviewed every three years or whenever significant changes occur.

## **Children Missing Education (CME)**

Schools must liaise with CME when a parent withdraws a child to be home educated, or should they be unable to establish the whereabouts of a child who has been absent for more than 10 days without contact from the parents. CME guidance is stored in the front office and all communications logged.