



St Thomas à Becket CE (Aided) Primary School

At St Thomas à Becket CEVA Primary School with wisdom and inspiration, rooted in our Christian Values, we nurture all to flourish.

Our Core Values are: Friendship, Respect, Truth, Forgiveness and Perseverance

Attendance Policy and Registration of pupils

SATUTORY	
Policy agreed date	February 2021
Approved by	HT
Next review date	February 2023
Linked to	Admissions Anti-bullying Special educational needs Behaviour Safeguarding Exclusions Teaching and learning

Policy Statement

Attendance at school is compulsory and a legal requirement.

At St Thomas à Becket CEVA Primary School we are committed to equality of opportunity for its pupils and will work alongside pupils and parents to enable all children to maximise their attendance and their access to the curriculum.

- Education prepares children for life, is precious and is a right to which every child is entitled.
- Regular attendance underpins children achieving their full potential.
- Absence from school can seriously disrupt a child's continuity of learning and can cause anxiety for the child. Not only do they miss essential lessons, many children find it difficult to catch up when they return, nor will they be able to participate confidently alongside their peers.
- Attendance and punctuality are valuable life skills.

Aims of this policy

- To ensure that children and young people make the best use of their educational opportunities by attending school regularly, punctually and in a state of readiness for learning.
- To set out the legal framework and to explain the roles and responsibilities of the Local Authority (LA) and the Education Welfare Service (EWS)
- To ensure that everyone within the school community understands their responsibilities in promoting excellent attendance and punctuality.
- To outline procedures for parents when absence is unavoidable.
- To outline procedures for parents when requesting an 'authorised absence'.
- To outline procedures for the school when absence is not explained.
- To outline procedures for the school when a child's attendance / lateness is a cause for concern.

The Legal Framework

- This policy is written in the light of guidance from the DfE 'School Attendance: Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities' (November 2016) which in turn is informed by national legislation and therefore reflects the school's statutory duties. It also reflects the guidance contained in the Wiltshire LA Attendance Policy (Revised June 2017).
- The school recognises the responsibilities of the Educational Welfare Service and supports them in the discharging of the statutory duty of the Local Authority in respect of non-attendance at school.
- Under section 7 of the Education Act 1996, parents must ensure their children are educated. For most parents/carers this means registering their child at a school and ensuring their regular attendance. Failure to do so can result in the issue of a Penalty Notice or being prosecuted.
- By law schools are required:
 - To take an attendance register twice a day: at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon
 - To report to the LA pupils who fail to attend regularly or who are absent for ten school days or more without known reason
- By law the attendance register must show for every session, whether a pupil is present, absent, attending approved educational activity or unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.
- Authorised absence is where the school has given approval in advance for a pupil of compulsory school age to be away, or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as a satisfactory justification for the absence. All other absences are unauthorised.

Roles and responsibilities

Parent/Carer Responsibilities

Under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996, parents/carers who have chosen to have their child educated at school have a legal responsibility to ensure their child's regular attendance.

This means:

- to work in partnership with the school to take an active interest in their child's school career, to reinforce school policies/arrangements on homework, behaviour and approach to learning, to attend parents' evening and other meetings where necessary and practical.
- ensuring that their child arrives at school on time (not before **8.35am** and not after **8.45am**) and that they are collected on time.
- ensuring that their child arrives appropriately dressed and in a 'condition to learn' (i.e. not too tired or too hungry)
- to avoid, unless urgent, arranging medical or dental appointments during school hours
- where there are problems with attendance and punctuality, parents/carers are expected to work in partnership with the school, and any other agencies (as appropriate) to help to resolve the problems relating to non-attendance and
- to acknowledge receipt of the school's Attendance Policy

Procedures for reporting absences:

- In the event of illness or any other reason for absence, parents/carers will telephone the school office before 8:50am on the first day of the absence.
- Parents/carers must provide an explanation for the absence. There is a dedicated messaging service to report absences that can be accessed 24 hours a day.
- If the absence is to continue for more than one day, parents/carers should telephone the school on subsequent days, again before 8:50am, unless they are able to give an exact length of time on the first day of absence.
- Parents/carers need to inform the school if a child's absence is due to some traumatic event which the school needs to deal with sensitively so that the school can respond appropriately to the emotional needs of the child on their return to school.
- Parents/carers need to inform the school if a child's absence is due to any illness or medical information that may have implications for others i.e, chickenpox.
- Where the school has not been notified of a child's absence, the office will phone parents/carers to establish the reasons for that absence. A note or explanation of a child's absence does not mean the absence will automatically be authorised – this decision will rest with the school who will need to be satisfied that the absence is legitimate.
- Where the school has not been notified and it is not possible to contact parents/carers to establish the reason for absence, the school is obliged to mark the child's absence as 'unauthorised'.
- Parents/carers should ensure that they sign their child in or out, with office staff, if they arrive at school outside normal hours or are taken out of school before the end of the normal school day, giving the reason for lateness or early withdrawal from school.
- Parents are asked to ensure that their child is fully aware of the procedures they must follow in the event that they are late for school.

Procedures for requesting 'authorised absence' from school

- Parents/carers must seek permission from the Headteacher (or authorised representative) by submitting a written application, detailing the 'exceptional circumstances', in advance of any request for leave of absence. Leave of absence is made by completing the 'Leave of Absence Request Form' which can be obtained from the school office and is on our website. Each request will be considered individually and should meet the circumstances of being 'exceptional'. Examples of exceptional circumstances are as follows:
 - Emergency medical/dental appointments (although it is the school's expectation that every effort should be made to secure routine doctor/dentist appointments out of school hours or during the school holidays)
 - Exceptional family circumstances, such as bereavement, religious observance, wedding of an immediate family member or a family emergency
 - Absence for an external exam such as ballet, music and to attend elite events.

Parents should note that holidays during term time can only be authorised if there are exceptional

circumstances as listed above. Family holidays or cheaper holidays will not count as a reason to authorise absence during term time.

- Inevitably there will be occasions when absence is unavoidable or justifiable, these may include:
 - Illness
 - Bereavement
 - Religious observance
 - Visits to other schools (secondary transfer)
 - Education at another establishment (e.g. referral unit)
 - Approved sporting activity / performance
 - Hospital and medical appointments (e.g. Paediatrician) if these are supported with an appointment letter which should be shared with the office staff for the attendance register
- Where an absence is unavoidable or unplanned, then parents/carers are asked to follow the procedures for reporting absences as outlined above.
- Where an absence is for anything else apart from an annual holiday (in exceptional circumstances), the school will need to be informed in writing.

Responsibilities of the School

- The Headteacher is responsible for ensuring that the policy is effectively implemented and communicated to parents/carers and for improving and maintaining good attendance.
- The school will ensure that all parents/carers are made aware of this policy by making this document available in school and on the website.
- The Headteacher is responsible for developing coherent whole school systems for improving attendance and punctuality including supportive interventions from other agencies if necessary.
- The member of staff with particular responsibility for monitoring attendance and punctuality is the Admin Officer who will ensure that information is available for the Senior Leadership Team to produce termly reports.
- The Headteacher, the Deputy Headteacher and the Education Welfare Service have responsibility to identify any necessary actions where a pupil's attendance or punctuality may be a cause for concern. These actions could include:
 - Informal discussion with parents (face to face or telephone);
 - Formal attendance meeting;
 - Referral to EWO;
 - Referral for penalty notice (unauthorised absence).
- Where pupil attendance falls below 90%, the pupil will fall into the category of 'persistent absentee'. Agreed procedures will be implemented by the team for pupils in this category which will include inviting parents to a formal attendance meeting to discuss available support and set targets for improvement.
- Teachers are responsible for ensuring that an accurate register is taken at the designated time and will discuss the importance of punctuality and regular attendance with pupils as appropriate. All teachers challenge lateness and set high standards of punctuality themselves.
- Where any follow up action is taken by teachers or Senior Leadership Team, accurate records must be kept and copies placed on individual pupil records.

Responsibilities of the Governing Body

- The Headteacher will ensure that attendance and punctuality information is reported termly to Governors including the success of any actions taken.

Concerns over attendance, punctuality and 'unauthorised absences'

- Early identification is crucial and communication with parents/carers needs to begin as soon as the problem is detected. Initial concerns will either be communicated in person, by phone or by letter (if in person or by phone this should be followed up by a letter), explaining the actions that might be taken should the problem persist and seeing if the school can offer any support to the parents/carers to resolve the problem.

- We will make every effort to work constructively and sympathetically with parents/carers to respond to their individual circumstances.
- Where appropriate, the school may request that the parents/carers enter into a 'parenting contract' which sets out what is expected of the parents/carers, pupil and school.
- The school is obliged to report any concerns regarding attendance (including persistent late arrival) and absence to the EWS.¹
- The Local Authority can issue a penalty notice in the following circumstances:
 - overt truancy
 - absence from school, either when a parent continually fails to provide an explanation or the school considers the absence to be avoidable.
 - holidays taken during term time where the absence has not been authorised by the school.
- Penalty Notices are also issued for absence taken during term time where a pupil's overall attendance is less than 90% and the leave of absence has not been unauthorised by the school, or an absence has not been requested in advance and the pupil has had a minimum of 10 sessions (5 school days) lost to unauthorised absence during the previous six months in the academic year and additional unauthorised absence during the previous twelve months up to and including the day the Education Welfare Service is notified.
- A Penalty Notice can also be issued to the parent/carer of an excluded child in the event that their child is present in a public place during school hours on a day which is one of the first five school days of that exclusions or, where the exclusion is for a fixed period of five days or less, any of the days of that exclusion period.

Registers of Pupils

All schools must keep two registers of pupils. The admissions register, which records the personal details of every pupil at the school, and the attendance register which records every pupil's attendance at every session the school is open to pupils.

Pupils join the school roll on the expected first day of attendance and must be listed in both admissions and attendance registers from that day. Schools set this date after taking all of the circumstances into consideration. For most pupils the expected first day of attendance is the first day of the school year. However, there will be occasions, such as when a pupil is moving between schools when this is not appropriate and schools should aim to agree a suitable date with parents.

If a pupil has accepted a place at the school and fails to attend on the agreed date, the school must follow up the absence, establish the reason and mark it in the normal way. This will ensure the pupil does not lose his/her place and that any Safeguarding Children's Welfare and Missing from Education concerns are addressed.

If the pupil has been delayed in joining the school then the school can agree a new first date of expected attendance. For example, a pupil might be relocating to the school from another part of the country and the relocation could be delayed. In this circumstance the school can agree to keep the pupil's place open and agree a new start date.

Admission information

The school will record all admission information for every pupil using the Schools Information Management System (SIMS). The details that will be recorded are:

- The pupil's full name;
- The pupil's gender;
- The pupil's date of birth;
- The date the pupil was admitted to the school;
- The name of the school the pupil last attended.

In addition to the above information the school will also record the following for each pupil:

- The name and address of every parent and carer of the pupil that is known to the school;
- Which of these parents and carers the pupil normally lives with; and

- Emergency contact details of the parents and carers.

The attendance register

The attendance register will be taken at the start of each morning session and during each afternoon session that the school is open. On each occasion we will record whether the pupil was:

- Present;
- Absent

If the pupil was absent the reason for absence will be recorded using one of the approved national attendance codes:

/ Present (AM)
 \ Present (PM)
 B Educated off site (not Dual reg.)
 C Other authorised circumstances
 D Dual registration (attending other establishment)
 E Excluded (no alternative provision made)
 F Extended family holiday (agreed)
 G Family holiday (not agreed or days in excess) (Unauthorised absence)
 H Annual family holiday (agreed)
 I Illness (not med/dental appointments)
 J Interview
 L Late (before registers closed)
 M Medical / Dental
 N No reason yet provided for absence
 O Unauthorised Absence (not covered by other code)
 P Approved sporting activity
 R Religious observance
 S Study leave
 T Traveller absence
 U Late (after registers closed) (Unauthorised absence)
 V Educational visit
 W Work experience
 # School closed to pupils & staff
 Y Enforced closure
 X Non-compulsory school age absence
 Z Pupil not on roll
 - All should attend / No mark recorded

Teachers will mark the electronic attendance register in SIMS.

Deletion of pupils

The regulations enable schools to delete compulsory school-age children in the following circumstances:

- The school is replaced by another school on a School Attendance Order;
- The School Attendance order is revoked by the Local Authority;
- Completion of compulsory school age;
- Permanent exclusion;
- Death of the pupil;
- Transfer between schools; and
- Pupil withdrawn to be educated outside the school system.
- Failure to return from an extended family holiday after both the school and the local authority have tried to locate the pupil;
- A medical condition prevents their attendance and return to the school before ending compulsory school-age;
- In custody for more than four months;

- 20 days continuous unauthorised absence and both the local authority and school have tried to locate the pupil; and
- Left the school but not known where he/she has gone after both the school and the local authority have tried to locate the pupil.

Schools can only lawfully delete non-compulsory school-age children in the following circumstances:

- Left the school;
- 20 school-days continuous absence without good reason;
- Death of the pupil;
- Permanent exclusion.

In general, pupils can be deleted from the register of one school if they register at another.