



Toddington St. George Church of England School

Attendance Policy

Staff/Governors consulted: Yes

Date ratified by the Governing Body: October 2016

Review date: October 2018 (every 2 years)

Person(s) responsible for implementing and monitoring the policy

The policy will be will be implemented and monitored by the School Office Manager and the Head teacher respectively.

Attendance Policy

Vision

Toddington St George Church of England School (Diocese of St Albans) is an inclusive Christian community in which the curriculum is underpinned by agreed values based on Christian teaching. The strategic plan, aims and policies enable every member of the school community to be valued as a child of God where they are given the opportunity to be inspired, challenged and supported in their learning and to receive committed, conscientious pastoral care.

*This is embodied in the TSG school vision '**Lighting a Spark in Every Child**'.*

Rationale for this policy

- For a child to achieve their full educational potential a high level of school attendance is essential.
- We are committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all our pupils/students and endeavour to provide an environment where all pupils feel valued and welcome.
- Parents and pupils play a part in making our school successful. Every child has a right to access the education to which he/she is entitled.
- Parents and teachers share the responsibility for supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and punctuality for all. It is our duty to consistently strive to achieve a goal of 100% attendance for all children.
- Every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and their parents or carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance.
- For our children to take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered it is vital your child is at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. The routines children develop around attendance and punctuality at school are the same as the expectations of any future employer in the world of work.
- High attainment, confidence with peers and staff, and future aspirations depend on good school attendance.

Good attendance is important because:

- statistics show a direct link between educational achievement and absence levels
- regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically
- regular attenders find friendships easier to develop and maintain
- regular attenders find school routines, school work easier to maintain
- regular attenders find learning more satisfying
- regular attenders find transition points easier to manage

School attendance is subject to various education legislation and this school attendance policy is written to reflect both legislative requirements and the guidance produced by the Department for Education and Central Bedfordshire Council.

This attendance policy is also consistent with the following Toddington St George school policies:

- *Admissions*
- *Self-esteem ,behaviour and anti-bullying*
- *Safeguarding and Child protection*
- *Exclusion*
- *Special Educational Needs and Disability*

Operating the policy

1 Promoting good attendance

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parent/s and the child. Our Home School Agreement contains details of how we will work with parents and our expectations of what parents will need to do to ensure their child achieves good attendance.

To help us all to focus on this we I:

- set attendance targets for the whole school, (and individual pupils as necessary) and ensure that these are publicised
- report to you on how your child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate (known in school as 'Lates') is and how this relates to their attainment
- provide information on all matters related to attendance as necessary in our regular newsletters and on the website
- celebrate good attendance by rewarding 100% attendance in Years R to 4 and displaying individual class achievements -celebrating these in whole school Collective Worship or assemblies every week
- reward good or improving attendance through certificates as appropriate for individuals

2. Roles and responsibilities

The SOM (SLT member) will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure the attendance policy is consistently applied throughout the school. Analysis and discussion re actions will be actioned with the agreement of the Head teacher and SOM.

The Head and SOM will also ensure that attendance is both recorded accurately by the administrative team and that it is then analysed.

They will ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to deal with any difficulties.

If absence is frequent or continuous, except where a child is clearly unwell, staff will discuss with parents/carers the reasons for their child's absence and will encourage them to keep these to a minimum. A note or explanation from a pupil's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised.

The decision whether or not to authorise an absence will always rest with the Head teacher and a HAST form will be issued for any application for holiday leave. (This will be available on the website to download, and also from the offices).

Responsibilities of teachers

- Ensure that all children are registered accurately.
- Promote and reward good attendance at all appropriate opportunities.
- Liaise with the attendance lead on matters of absence and punctuality.
- Communicate any concerns or underlying problems that may account for a child's absence.
- Support pupils with absence to engage with their learning once they are back in school.

Responsibilities of children

- Attend every day unless they are ill or have an unavoidable reason for absence.
- Arrive at school on time and fully equipped for lessons.
- Get to registration and lessons on time.
- Take responsibility for registering at the front office (only if they are in Year 3 or Year 4 and unaccompanied by a Parent or Carer) if they are late, and will be collected by front office staff if are leaving the school site with an authorised adult at an agreed time during school hours.

Responsibilities of Parents/Carers

Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parent/carer's legal responsibility (Section 7 Education Act 1996) and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law.

A 'parent' is defined in Section 576 of the Education Act 1996 and is defined as follows;

- all natural parents, whether they are married or not
- any person who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility for a child or young person
- any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person (having care of a child or young person means that the child lives with and is looked after by that person, irrespective of what their relationship is).

Parents will:

- inform the school on the first day of absence
- discuss with the class teacher any planned absences well in advance
- support the school with their child in aiming for 100% attendance each year
- make sure that any absence is clearly accounted for by telephone, school answerphone message, on the first and subsequent days of absence, or by letter or email if a phone is unavailable (This will be by 9.05 a.m.).
- avoid taking their child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments
- only request leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance.

3. Recording attendance

3.1 Registration Legally the register must be taken twice daily. Once at the beginning of the school day (by 8.35 Nursery 9.00am Years R, 1-4)) and again in the afternoon (by 12.30 Nursery, Yr. R by 12.50, Year 1 and 2 by 1.05 and Year 3 and 4 by 1.35pm). *NB These are not school start times but the times by which the register must be taken.*

3.2 Lateness/punctuality

It is important to be on time at the start of the morning and afternoon sessions and also to lessons. The start of school/lessons is used to give out instructions or organise work.

If a child is late they can miss time with their class teacher getting vital information, cause disruption to the lesson for others, and it can be embarrassing leading to possible further absence.

- The school day begins at 8.30 in Nursery and 8.55 in the rest of the school and all **pupils are expected to be in school at this time**. Morning registration is at 8.35 Nursery and at 9.00am Years R , 1-4 and closes at 8.40 and 9.05 a.m.
- All lateness is recorded daily in the late book at the front of school and in registers
- This information will be required by the courts, should a prosecution for non-attendance or lateness be necessary
-
- Arrival after the close of registration will be marked as **unauthorised absence** and coded **U** in line with the Department of Education guidance. This mark shows them to be on site, but is legally recorded as an unauthorised absence.
- If a pupil is late due to a **medical appointment**, they will receive an **authorised absence**, coded **M**. Please be advised that, where possible, doctors and dentists appointments are to be made outside of school hours or during school holidays.
- Punctuality at school is vital and registers should not be kept open for an extended period of time
-

Pupils who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of the other pupils.

Ongoing and repeated absent lates (**U code**) are unauthorised absences and **maybe be subject to legal action** (see Section 6 for further detail).

Parents, guardians or carers of pupils who have patterns of lateness will be contacted to discuss the importance of good time keeping and how this might be achieved. If lateness persists parents, guardians or carers will be invited to attend the school and discuss the problem and support offered. If support is not appropriate or is declined and a child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence due to lateness recorded in any 12 week period, the school may ask Central Bedfordshire Council to issue parents with a Penalty Notice.

3.3 What to do if my child is absent?

First day absence

A child not arriving at school where the parents haven't informed the school is considered a **safeguarding** matter. This is why information about the reason for any absence is always required. If your child is absent you must:

- contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence by answerphone /phone or email
- registers will be updated by the clerical assistant and the attendance IMS will be updated from the registers weekly
- send a note or email in on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence unless that has been recorded on the answerphone when phoning in their absence
- collect your child promptly at the end of the school day.
- telephone school to confirm who is collecting your child if you are or another person on your emergency contact list (held at school) is unable to pick up
- where late collection is persistent and/or significantly late, the school is obliged to share concerns, as necessary, with other agencies including both the Police and Childrens Social Care. The school will not release children to anyone other than those named on the emergency contact list for that child (on our IMS) or to the person we are informed will be collecting by the parent/carer (with PR) that day.

- the school may place a child who has not been collected at the appropriate time into the after-school club and provide the parent/carer with the bill.

If your child is absent we will:

- telephone or text you on the first day of absence by 9.30 a.m. if we have not heard from you – this is because we have a duty to ensure your child's safety as well as their regular school attendance
- invite you in to discuss the situation with our School Office manager/ Assistant Head or Head teacher if absences persist
- refer the matter to the Central Bedfordshire Council's Access and Inclusion Service if absence is unauthorised and doesn't meet school expectations

Third day absence

Please note:

If your child is not seen and contact has not been established with any of the named parents/carers, after three days of absence the school is required to consider implementing the '**Child Missing in Education' (CME)** procedures as set down by Central Bedfordshire Council.

We will make all reasonable enquiries to establish contact with parents/carers and the child, including making enquiries to known friends, wider family and neighbours known to the school.

Ten days absence

We have a legal duty to report the absence of any pupil who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days. If the child is not seen and contact has not been established with the named parent/carer then the local authority is notified that the Child is Missing Education.

Staff from the Access and Inclusion Service will visit the last known address and alert key services to locate the child. So help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up-to-date contact number and home address. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

Continued or ongoing absence

If your child misses **39 or more sessions** of absence across the school year, for whatever reason, they are defined as a '**Persistent absentee**'.

Absence for whatever reason disadvantages a child, by creating gaps in his or her learning. Research shows that these gaps, at whatever level, affect attainment. We monitor all absence thoroughly and all attendance data is shared with the Local Authority and the Department for Education.

All our persistent absentee pupils and their parents are subject to an Attendance Plan or home school contract and these may include:

- a) **a timeline of school action for persistent absence**
- b) **a welcome back** (It is important that on return from an unavoidable absence all pupils are made to feel welcome. This will include ensuring that the pupil is helped to catch up on missed work and brought up to date with any information that has been passed to the other pupils.

4. Request for leave of absence

Amendments to school attendance regulations were updated in September 2013:

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations state that head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are **exceptional circumstances**.

It is important to note that head teachers can determine the length of the authorised absence, as well as whether absence is authorised at all.

The fundamental principles for defining **exceptional** are

- **Rare**
- **Significant**
- **Or unavoidable**, which means the event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time.

Circumstances where absences may be regarded as **exceptional** will vary from school to school and family to family.

There is, however, **no legal entitlement for time off in school term time to go on holiday** and in the majority of cases holiday will not be authorised.

Parents/carers wishing to apply for leave of absence need to fill in an application form (available from the school office and on our website (please note 2 pages when printing off this form) in advance and before making any travel arrangements.

If term-time leave is taken without prior permission from the school, the absence will be unauthorised and if the number of sessions of absence reaches the thresholds in Central Bedfordshire Council **Penalty Notice Code of Conduct (10 sessions of absence on 12 school weeks)**, parents/carers may be issued with a penalty notice or other legal action in accordance with the code (see Section 6 for detail).

Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's education as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children out during school time.

For national guidance refer to:

1 *School attendance*, 2016, located at:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance

5. Understanding types of absence

Pupils are expected to attend school every day for the entire duration of the academic year, unless there is an unavoidable reason for the absence.

There are two main categories of absences:

- **authorised absence**: is when the school has accepted the explanation offered as satisfactory justification for the absence or given approval in advance for such an absence. If no explanation is received, absences cannot be authorised
- **unauthorised absence**: is when the school has not received a reason for absence or has not approved a child's leave absence from school after a parent's request.

Unauthorised absences are likely to include: parents allowing their child/ren permission to be off school unnecessarily, such as for

- shopping, birthdays, to look after siblings
- truancy before or during the school day
- absences which have not been explained.

A school can, if needed, change an authorised absence to an unauthorised absence and vice versa if new information is presented. Any changes will be communicated to parents/carers. An example of this would be where a parent states a child is unwell but on return to school there is evidence they have been on holiday.

6. Legal Measures for failing to ensure regular school attendance (including penalty notices)

Section 7 of The Education Act 1996 requires parents to secure the education of their children of compulsory school age.

The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable

(a) to his age, ability and aptitude, and

(b) to any special educational needs he may have,

either by regular attendance at school or otherwise

Legal measures for tackling persistent absence or lateness

The following legal measures may be used for pupils of compulsory school age who are registered at a school and are not attending regularly:

Penalty Notices: The Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003

Magistrates Court Action under Sec 444 (1) and (1a) of the Education Act 1996

Penalty Notices

Central Bedfordshire Council's Code of Conduct for Penalty Notices states that where a child has had 10 unauthorised absences in a 12 school week period, the school may request a penalty notice be issued. The code of conduct is a statutory document that ensures that the powers for this legal sanction are applied consistently and fairly across all schools and their families within the authority.

Penalty Notices can be issued when

- a pupil has taken holiday during term-time and the absence has not been authorised by the school, providing the school has taken into account DfE guidance to inform its decision-making
- where the school believes that the sanction will lead to an improvement in attendance, e.g. persistent late arrival at school; parents failure to attend/co-operate at a parenting contract meeting

Parents and carers will be alerted /warned about the possibility of a penalty notice being requested for unauthorised absence, via the school's newsletter, through the leave of absence request form, or through the school's attendance policy and website.

If more than one parent has parental responsibility, both parents will receive a Penalty Notice. In situations where there is more than one pupil in a family with irregular school attendance, multiple penalty notices can be issued to the same parents during the year. However, this action must be subject to careful consideration and co-ordination.

Legal Action taken under Section 444 (1) and (1a) Education Act 1996

Where the school has tried to address a pupil's unauthorised absences but the measures taken have been unsuccessful, it can then refer on to the Local Authority School Attendance Officer. If there is either no improvement in the attendance nor satisfactory evidence provided for the absences following their intervention, then it is likely legal action at Magistrates Court will be initiated.

Sanctions available to the court are as follows;

- a fine of up to £2,500
- a conditional discharge – you will be given a set amount of time in which to improve your child's attendance. Should you fail the Council may bring a further prosecution against you and, if found guilty, you will be sentenced for both offences
- an absolute discharge – the case is proved but you will not be subject to a penalty, although you will receive a conviction
- a community order such as unpaid work, curfew or tagging
- imprisonment - for up to three months

7. Support

7.1 My child is trying to avoid coming to school.

What should I do?

Children are sometimes reluctant to attend school.

Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents/carers and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend then it is better not to cover up their absence or to give into pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may also make things worse.

Please contact your child's class teacher immediately and openly discuss your worries. Your child could be avoiding school for a number of reasons – difficulties with school work, bullying, friendship problems or family difficulties. It is important that we identify the reason for your child's reluctance to attend school and work together to tackle the problem.

In some cases you may find it helpful to discuss the circumstances of your child's difficulties with another professional.

The Assistant Heads or Head or Head will arrange to meet with you to support you and your child if concerns persist.

What can I do to encourage my child to attend school?

- Make sure your child gets enough sleep and gets up in plenty of time each morning.
- Ensure that she/he leaves home in the correct clothes and properly equipped.
- Show your child, by your interest, that you value his/her education.
- Your child will bring home a reading record each evening. Please ensure you look at it with your child and sign it ready for the next day.
- Be interested in what your child is doing in school, chat to them about the things they have learnt and the friends they have made /played with
- and even chat about what they had for lunch!

For many parents, your child attending school may be your first experience of being separated from them. This can seem daunting at first for both of you, but consistency and a caring, supportive home and school life will make the transition a quick and easy experience for you both.

7.2 Leavers

If your child is leaving our school (other than when transferring to the middle school) parents are asked to:

1. Give the attendance officer comprehensive information about their plans, including
 - date of a move
 - new address
 - new telephone numbers,
 - your child's new school
 - and the start date when known.

This should be submitted to our school in writing on our 'Leaving school' form. This can be obtained from the office or on the website

If pupils leave and we do not have the above information, then your child is considered to be a **child missing education**.

This requires schools and local authorities to then carry out investigations to try and locate your child, which may include liaising with Children's Services, the Police and other agencies. By giving us the above information, these investigations can be avoided.

7.3 Absence through child participation in public performances, including theatre, film or television work and modelling

A parent can seek leave of absence from a school for their child to take part in a performance. They must however contact the head teacher to discuss the nature and frequency of this, the impact that this may have on their child's education, whether the child has a valid performance licence and whether education will be provided by the employer during any future leave of absence. It is, however, down to the Head teacher's discretion as to whether to authorise this.

Any absence recorded as part of a child's participation in a public performance is recorded as C, an authorised absence.

7.4 Absence through competing at regional, county or national level for sport

Parents can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in regional, county, national and international events and competitions. It is, however, down to the Headteacher's discretion as to whether to authorise this and they will wish to discuss with you the nature and frequency of the absence and how learning will continue if absence occurs.

Permission for your child to leave early or arrive late to attend coaching and training sessions is also at the discretion of the head teacher and is not likely to be approved if it is a regular event, unless the sports club or association is providing an education tutor as part of their coaching.

The regulations related to children participating in public performances are separate to those around authorising leave of absence. Head teachers can authorise this absence. For further advice and guidance on Child Employment and Performance Licenses contact Central Bedfordshire Council on 0300 300 4953

7.5 Gypsy, Roma, Traveller and Showman families

The absence of a child from a Traveller family who has left the area can be authorised if the absence is for the parent's work purposes only and it is believed that the family intends to return.

A school cannot remove a Traveller child from the school roll whilst they are travelling. When the child is travelling the school holds the place open and records the absence as authorised by using the *T* code.

Distance learning packs for Traveller children are not an alternative to attendance at school although may offer support to the pupil whilst they are away.

Please note that pupils must have attended 200 sessions in a rolling 12-month period to be able to use travelling for work purposes as a defence against prosecution. For further advice and guidance on attendance and Gypsy, Roma, Traveller and Showman families, contact Central Bedfordshire Council on 0300 300 4953.

To ensure the continuity of learning for Traveller children, dual registration at two schools is allowed.

Section 8

The Admission and Attendance Register

1.1 Amendments to the Admission Register and Attendance Register

Every amendment made to the admission register and the attendance register must include:

- the original entry
- the amended entry
- the reason for the amendment
- the date on which the amendment was made
- the name and position of the person who made the amendment.

1.2 Preservation of the Admission Register and Attendance Register

Every entry in the admission register and attendance register must be preserved for a period of three years after the date on which the entry was made.

Appendix

Legislation

Section 7 of The Education Act 1996 requires parents to secure the education of their children of compulsory school age.

The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable

(a) to his age, ability and aptitude, and

(b) to any special educational needs he may have,

either by regular attendance at school or otherwise

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on 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.

It is not statutory for schools to have an attendance policy.

It is statutory to have a home school agreement as set down in Section 110 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

The following pieces of legislation are in the attendance policy and referred to in our letters to parents

- Section 7 of The Education Act 1996
- Section 576 Education Act 1996
- Section 23 Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003
- Section 444(1) Education Act 1996
- Section 444(1A) Education Act 1996
- School attendance Department for Education guidance 2016

Schools should:

1. Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence
2. Ensure every child has access to full-time education
3. Act early to address patterns of absence.

Parents must fulfil their legal duties by ensuring children of compulsory school age who are registered to a school attend regularly.