



# Chandlers Field Primary School

## Attendance Policy

**Date of policy:** Autumn Term 2018  
**Date for review:** Autumn Term 2019  
**Policy written by:** Attendance Co-ordinator

### Statement of Intent

This policy and its associated paperwork was developed and adopted by the Esher, Cobham and Molesey (ECM) Schools Cluster<sup>1</sup> during 2012. All schools in the Partnership are committed to developing and implementing a consistent and transparent set of joint standards and approaches that improve and maintain attendance in local schools.

The ECM Cluster schools are committed to developing and implementing policies and practice that supports improved attendance, in partnership with parents/carers, pupils and governors, with relevant departments within Surrey County Council and Elmbridge Borough Council, and with other organisations who have an interest or are affected by school attendance.

The overarching aim of this policy is to build a network of local schools, which serve the community commendably, and of which the community is proud. Whilst all schools have adopted this policy and its principles, the ways in which these are implemented and monitored are at the discretion of each school and will therefore vary to individual schools' ethos, circumstances and the community it serves.

Chandlers Field School along with other local schools and Surrey County Council, firmly believe that all pupils benefit from regular school attendance. Full and regular attendance at school is crucial for a child's future life chances and establishes a positive work ethic early in life. To this end we will do all we can to encourage parents/carers to ensure their children achieve maximum possible attendance and that any problems that prevent full attendance are identified and acted on promptly. Pupils will be expected to achieve 100% attendance but when absence is unavoidable, parents/carers will be required to inform the school at the earliest opportunity.

Parents/carers, whose children are of compulsory school age and are registered at a school, are responsible for ensuring that their children attend school regularly. If they do not do so they may be committing an offence under the Education Act 1996 and could be liable to prosecution or to be served with a penalty notice.

In line with the Education Regulations (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006, all unexplained absences of 10 days or more are required to be reported to the Local Authority. Schools are therefore required to report all absence figures to the local authority and the DfE and to ensure they are recorded on a child's annual report. Rates of absence are also taken into account by Ofsted as part of a school's inspection.

### Expectations

**As an ECM school we expect that all pupils will:**

- attend school regularly
- attend school punctually
- attend school appropriately prepared for the day

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<sup>1</sup> The Esher, Cobham and Molesey Schools Cluster includes all of the 10 (9 primary, 1 secondary) schools in Esher, Cobham and Molesey.

- discuss with their class teacher, Head of Year or Headteacher any problems preventing them from attending school.

**As an ECM school we expect that all parents/carers and persons who have day to day responsibility for the children will:**

- encourage regular school attendance and be aware of their legal responsibilities
- ensure that the child/children in their care arrive at school punctually, prepared for the school day and have completed any homework they have been given
- contact the school promptly whenever any problem occurs that may keep the child away from school
- notify the school immediately of any change to contact details
- notify the school of any home circumstances that might affect the behaviour and learning of their child
- notify the office by telephone when your child is absent (on the first day of absence) and send a note to explain the absence when s/he returns to school. If your child is absent for 5 days or more medical evidence should be provided

**As an ECM school we expect that school staff will:**

- keep regular and accurate records of attendance for all pupils, as required by current legislation
- monitor every pupil's attendance
- contact parents/carers as soon as possible when a pupil fails to attend and where no message has been received to explain the absence
- encourage good attendance and punctuality
- provide a welcoming atmosphere and a safe learning environment for children
- provide a sympathetic response to any pupil's concerns
- make initial enquiries to parents/carers of pupils who are attending irregularly, expressing the school's concerns and clarifying the school and the local authority's expectations regarding regular school attendance
- The school's Attendance Co-ordinator working with the attached Education Welfare Officer, may follow up concerns about attendance by contacting the parents/carers at home. Where appropriate, the Education Welfare Officer may also make a home visit.
- refer irregular or unjustified patterns of attendance to the attached Education Welfare Officer
- fulfil, where possible, the requirements of the UN Convention – The Rights of the Child - by ensuring that children are consulted in all decisions that relate to them

**Categorisation of Absence**

Any student who is on roll but not present in school must be recorded within one of these categories:

**1. Unauthorised absence**

This is for students where no reason has been provided or whose absence is deemed to be without a valid reason. This includes:

- Absence during term time
- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Excessive illness without medical evidence

## 2. Authorised absence

This is for those students who are away from school for a reason that is deemed to be valid under the Education Act 1996, such as illness, emergencies or other unavoidable causes.

## 3. Approved Educational Activity

This covers types of supervised educational activity undertaken off site but with the approval of the school. This would include:

- Sporting activities
- Educational visits

### **Requests for leave of absence during term time**

No parent/carer can demand leave of absence during term-time for their child as a right and authorisation cannot be given retrospectively. **The Education (Pupil Registration)(England)(Amendment) Regulations 2013, which became law on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2013 state that Head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The Head teacher is required to determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if leave is granted.**

Permission for absence during term time is at the school's discretion and will only be granted in exceptional circumstances, for example for compassionate reasons.

If a family needs to request absence in term-time then an application for **Leave of Absence in Exceptional Circumstances** must, wherever possible, be completed at least two weeks prior to the leave date. This form can be obtained from the school office or website. The headteacher, who may consult with the Chair of Governors, will then decide whether or not to authorise the absence requested. Each request will be considered separately and a decision made based on the reasons for each request.

**Family holidays** - the school holiday dates are published a year in advance and are available from the school office and on the school's website. We expect that parents/carers will book their family holidays within the school holiday dates.

**Dental and medical treatments** - whilst the school will grant requests for absence for dental and medical treatments, parents/carers are encouraged, whenever possible, to book medical and dental appointments outside of the school day. When appointments during school hours are unavoidable, the school office should be notified in advance in writing, of the date and time of the appointment and when the child will be collected and/or returned to school, a form for this purpose can be collected from the school office. Evidence of the appointment may be requested.

### **Encouraging Attendance**

Chandlers Field School encourages regular attendance in the following ways,

- by providing a caring and welcoming learning environment
- by responding promptly to a child or parent's concerns about the school or other pupils
- by accurate and punctual completion of registers during morning and afternoon registration (see Lateness).
- by publishing weekly attendance statistics to parents in newsletters
- by celebrating good attendance

- certificates are awarded to pupils with good attendance each term
- the Headteacher will monitor pupils' attendance with the Attendance Co-ordinator and with the Education Welfare Officer
- by informing parents/carers in writing of irregular attendance, including lateness
- by if necessary arranging meetings with parents/carers
- by referring the families to the attached Education Welfare Officer if the irregular attendance continues

### **Punctuality and Lateness**

School starts at **8:55am** and all pupils should arrive promptly. Registers will be completed by **9:00am**. If pupils arrive after this time a late mark will be recorded, and if they arrive after 9.25am without exceptional circumstances it will be recorded as 'late after the close of register' and counted as an unauthorised absence for the morning session. If your child is late, they will need to enter the school via the main entrance/school office and provide a reason for their late arrival. The pupil's name must be recorded in the late book in case of a fire drill. Persistent lateness after the close of register of 5 occasions or more during a half term will be referred to the attached Education Welfare Officer.

### **Reporting Non-Attendance**

When a pupil is absent, parents/carers must notify the school office where possible by 9.30a.m on the first day, giving a reason for absence and an estimation of how long the absence is likely to last. Upon return to school, a note explaining the reason and dates of their absence should be provided. If a child is absent and the office has not received a call by 9.30a.m, the school will contact the parent/carer to ensure the child is safe. If the school has not been notified and has not been able to establish the reason for absence, then a letter is sent home asking for a written explanation so that, if appropriate, authorisation can be given. For absence due to illness of 5 days or more, a doctor's appointment card or prescription should be provided. If this is not received the absence may be recorded as unauthorised.

### **Responding To Non-Attendance**

When a pupil does not attend school we will respond in the following manner:

- On the first day of absence, if no note or telephone call is received from the parent/carer by 9.30am, the school will endeavour to contact them that day by phone.
- If, by the second day there has still been no contact made, the school will continue to try to contact the parent/carer. In cases where no information or contact is received, the school will send a letter of concern to parents/carers and invite them into school to discuss their concerns and the reasons for the absence.
- Parents will be informed that if the absence persists, a referral will be made to the attached Education Welfare Officer.
- Failure to comply with the expectations set by the Education Welfare Service may result in further action, an application for an Education Supervision Order, or court prosecution.
- Any pupil who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days will be notified to the Local Authority, by submitting a referral to the Educational Welfare Service. This is a legal requirement. The school will include details of the action that they have taken.

## Penalty Notices

The Education Welfare Service, acting on behalf of Surrey County Council may issue a Penalty Notice as an alternative to the prosecution of a parent/carer for their child's unauthorised absence from school and requires the recipient to pay a fixed amount. **The amount payable on issue of a Penalty Notice is £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. If the Penalty Notice is not paid within 28 days, the Local Authority must prosecute the parent/carer for failing to ensure regular school attendance under Section 444 Education Act 1996.**

### **Circumstances when a Penalty Notice may be issued:-**

- A Penalty Notice may be issued to parents/carers who are failing to secure their child's regular school attendance and are failing to engage with supportive measures to improve attendance proposed by the school or Education Welfare Officer.
- The Education (Pupil Registration)(England)(Amendment) Regulations 2013, which became law on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2013 state that Head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The Head teacher is required to determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if leave is granted.
- Where a child is taken out of school for a holiday during term time for 5 days/10sessions or more without the authority of the head teacher, each parent/carer is liable to receive a penalty notice for each child. To be liable, the unauthorised leave of absence in term time of 5 days/10 sessions or more will be within a three month period and need not be consecutive. In these circumstances, a warning will not be given where it can be shown that parents had previously been warned that such absences would not be authorised. In the case of separated parents, the penalty notice will be sent to the parent requesting leave of absence and/or taking the pupil out of school.

### **The issuing of a Penalty Notice for poor attendance may be considered appropriate in the following circumstances:**

- Pupils with unauthorised absences or late arrival after the close of register on 7 occasions in any six week period (not including school closures). The liable parent/carer will receive a written warning from the Education Welfare Service of the possibility of a Penalty Notice being issued and given a maximum of 15 school days to effect an improvement. During this period the pupil is not expected to incur any further unauthorised absence. Where a formal warning letter has been issued to parents, the Local Authority will monitor the attendance for a maximum of 15 school days and issue a Penalty Notice by first class post if the Local Authority determine that an acceptable level of attendance has not been achieved

- Pupils identified by police and education welfare officers engaged on Truancy Patrols and who have incurred unauthorised absences

### ***Penalty Notice relating to Exclusions***

Section 103 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 places a duty on parents to ensure that their child is not in a public place without justifiable cause during school hours when they are excluded from school. This duty applies to the first five days of each exclusion. Failure to do so will render the parent liable to a Penalty Notice. The amount payable is £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the Penalty Notice, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. If the Penalty Notice is not paid, the recipient will be prosecuted for the offence under Section 103. Alternative education provision will be made from the sixth day of any exclusion and failure to attend such provision without good reason will be treated as unauthorised absence.

### **Circumstances where a pupil can be taken off roll by the school**

Please be aware that the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006 and the Education Act 1996 allows a pupil to be taken off roll by the school if a parent requests 20 days or more unauthorised absence and a pupil does not return to school by a specified date, as notified by the school.

If a pupil is absent for 20 days or more continuously the school can only remove a pupil if at no time during that period the absence was authorised; the school does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil is unable to attend the school by reason of sickness or any unavoidable cause; the school and local authority have failed, after reasonable enquiry, to ascertain where the pupil is.

For further information please contact North East Education Office t: 01372 833588

### **Changing School**

It is important that if families decide to send the child in their care to a different school that they inform the Headteacher as soon possible. A pupil will not be removed from the school roll until the following information has been received,

- the dates the pupil will be leaving the school and starting the next
- the address of the new school
- the new home address, if it is known

School staff will then confirm with the parents the leaving date for their child. Following this date the pupil's school records will be sent on to the new school as soon as possible and within ten days of the child leaving. The Pupil Tracking Office at County Hall will also be sent appropriate information within ten days of anyone leaving or joining the school. If no notification is received from a new school then the child's name will not be removed from the school roll until after an investigation by Education Welfare.

### **School Organisation**

In order for the school's Attendance Policy to be successful, every member of staff must make attendance a high priority and convey this to pupils at all times. Parents/carers should also need to support these views in the home to ensure that children are receiving corresponding messages about the value of education.

In addition to this, the School has the following responsibilities:

**Headteacher and Governors:**

- adopt the whole policy
- ensure that the registration procedures are carried out efficiently in line with current legislation and that appropriate resources are provided
- ensure that all absences are coded correctly in line with DfE guidance
- initiate a scheme for contacting parents/carers on the first day of absence
- initiate contact with parents/carers in cases of unexplained absence and lateness before referring to the Education Welfare Service (unless there is a justifiable cause for concern when contact is required speedily, in which case immediate referral to the Education Welfare Service may be necessary)
- ensure that key office staff have dedicated and protected time for liaison and follow up work with the attached Education Welfare Officer
- consult and liaise closely with the attached Education Welfare Officer on a regular basis and take responsibility for ensuring appropriate pupils are identified and referred without delay
- to work in close collaboration with the attached Education Welfare Officer during their termly/half termly register analysis ensuring agreed action is carried out
- organise awards for good attendance
- to set whole school attendance targets
- monitor and evaluate attendance with the attached Education Welfare Officer

**Support Staff:**

- oversee the registration process and ensure that registers are completed accurately and punctually
- consult and liaise closely with the attached EWO regularly
- share any concerns expressed about attendance or disaffection that might lead to non-attendance with the Headteacher and attached EWO
- manage the school's scheme for contacting parents/carers on the first day of absence or as soon as practicable for pupils with unsatisfactory attendance
- As instructed by the Headteacher to initiate contact with parents/carers in cases of unexplained absence and lateness before referring to the attached EWO

**Teaching Staff:**

- complete registers accurately and punctually at least twice daily
- follow up any unexplained non-attendance or lateness with the Headteacher or Attendance Co-ordinator
- record all reasons for absences and lateness in the register
- inform the Headteacher of concerns
- be alert to signs of disaffection that may lead to non-attendance and report them to the Headteacher
- ensure children receive rewards as appropriate