St Chad's CE Primary School Attendance Policy

Review Date: September 2026
Next review: September 2027

Statutory Framework

Under Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act, a pupil is required to attend regularly at the school where they are a registered pupil. The Local Authority will use the 1996 Education Act and the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003 (penalty notices) in order to fulfil its duties in ensuring regular school attendance. Section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act gives powers to the Local authority to issue penalty notices where a parent/carer is considered capable of but unwilling to secure an improvement in their child's school attendance. These powers came into force on 27 February 2004.

The school is obliged by law to differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence. A letter or telephone message from a parent/carer does not in itself authorise an absence. Only if the school is satisfied as to the validity of the explanation offered by the letter/message will the absence be authorised. The school retains the right to request medical evidence in order to authorise any absence.

Statutory School Age

A child reaches school age on, or after, their fifth birthday. If they turn five between 1 September and 31 December they are of compulsory school age on 31 December. If they turn five between 1 January and 31 March they are of compulsory school age on 31 March. If they turn five between 1 April and 31 August, they are of compulsory school age on 31 August. A child continues to be of school age until the last Friday in June in the school year that they reach 16.

Why good attendance is important

When children are absent, their learning patterns change and learning is affected. Research indicates that some children never catch up after prolonged absence and that they experience greater problems during the secondary phase of their education.

Student attainment and achievement depend on regular presence in school. Any absence leads to missed learning opportunities and other experiences and may cause difficulties with social relationships. It may also lead to a threat to the welfare of our pupils or to opportunities for anti- social behaviour.

Encouraging good attendance is the shared responsibility of the school, the parent/carer, the pupil, partners in the Local Authority and the Police. Parents/carers have a responsibility to see that their children receive appropriate education and it is the responsibility of the Local Authority, through its Education Welfare Service, to ensure that this happens.

Rationale and Aims

At St Chad's:

- have a strong commitment to establishing a positive, supportive and safe environment where children feel valued;
- believe that excellent attendance, along with punctuality, is fundamental to ensuring children achieve their full potential and benefit fully from academic, personal and social opportunities;
- are committed to safeguarding the interests of every child, promoting their welfare and opportunities and believe that non-school attendance is a safeguarding issue;
- believe that parents/carers play an important role in supporting their school and encouraging pupils to reach good attendance levels.
- will take appropriate action to promote good attendance.

What the school, parents/carers and pupils can expect of the Education Welfare Service

The Education Welfare Service has a key function in working closely with the school, families, teams within the LA and other services and agencies, both statutory and voluntary. The Education Welfare Service aims to promote excellent levels of attendance and punctuality at school or otherwise, thereby contributing to raising pupil attainment.

A pupil's absence will have a serious impact on their attainment. They need to know that every absence is recorded and appropriate action is always taken. Absence can also be the first sign of a safeguarding issue.

What the school expects of their pupils

- to attend regularly;
- to arrive on time, appropriately prepared for the day;
- to hand any letters regarding absence from parents to the class teacher.

What the school expects of parents/carers

- to fulfil their parental responsibility by ensuring their children attend school regularly. (Parents/carers should be aware it is their responsibility in law for ensuring that their children of compulsory school age receive an efficient full-time education suitable for their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have);
- to ensure that their child arrives on time and is well prepared for the school day;
- to ensure that they contact the school on the first day their child is unable to attend;
- to contact the school whenever any problem occurs that may keep their child absent;

- to avoid medical appointments during the school day unless absolutely necessary and to collect from and return pupils to school whenever an appointment is unavoidable during the school day;
- to inform the Class Teacher and seek authorisation from the appropriate person within the school for any forthcoming appointments and, where possible, arrange appointments outside of the school day;
- to ensure the continuity of their child's education by taking holidays during the school holiday period except in special/exceptional circumstances (providing evidence where necessary why this is needed);
- 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 parent consultation evenings and other meetings where necessary;
- work in partnership with the school and other agencies (as and when appropriate), to resolve issues relating to non-attendance.

What parents/carers and pupils can expect from the school

- To maximise attendance rates as one of their key tasks, with clear procedures to identify and follow up absence and provide a consistent approach in dealing with absence and lateness;
- The Governors set and review attendance targets. The Head of School and/or the CEO inform the Board regulrary regarding these targets (i.e. met, not met or exceeded) and subsequent action is taken where appropriate.
- To identify a range of strategies to deal with absenteeism and punctuality;
- To support parents in ensuring regular and punctual attendance;
- To respond promptly to any issue which may lead to non, or irregular attendance;
- To be sensitive to the needs of the individual parent/carer. This will be reflected in the ways in which attendance issues are addressed, e.g. the school should recognise that some parents/carers have difficulty understanding written communications. (The school will also recognise the reluctance of some parents/carers to come into school).
- To be alert to critical times – e.g. return to school after a period of long -term sickness, a return after a traumatic event (either at home or school) or during the period leading to a phased transfer.
- To produce whole school Attendance Policies and Procedures which are consistently applied and clearly communicated to all parents/carers.
- To encourage and promote good attendance;
- To implement first day calling procedures;
- To take prompt action on any problems identified;
- To liaise with the Education Welfare Service and other services and agencies to assist and support parents/carers and pupils where needed;
- To notify parents/carers of their child's attendance record through an annual report home and regular updates, if appropriate, throughout the academic year;
- To refer to the Education Welfare Service where school intervention has failed to secure an improvement in attendance. The school will always refer to the

Education Welfare Service where a child is a Persistent Absentee pupil and there are no acknowledged reasons for absence by the school.

The Role of the Board of Governors

The school's Board of Governors is expected to set an attendance target for the school on an annual basis. It should be equal to or exceed the previous year's target. The Board will ensure that all groups of pupils are monitored to ensure consistency and effectiveness.

Registration – Every School Day is important

Schools are required to take an attendance register at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. The Education (Pupils' Attendance Records) Registration 1991 and the Education (Pupils Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 stipulate that schools should maintain an attendance register for each class containing the names of all pupils in the class.

Taking the register is a key part of the school day and should be seen as such by all staff, pupils and parents/carers. School times are available on the website.

The register is a legal document and may be required as evidence in court. It must be completed fully twice daily. The school must record whether every pupil was present, absent, present at approved educational activities or unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

Lateness

Registration closes at 8:50am. Once registration has taken place/has closed the following procedures apply:

- If a pupil arrives late, they will be marked as 'late' (Code L) but counted as present for that session (late defined as coming into school via the main door – having missed normal entry into school); pupil to be signed in on Entry Sign by accompanying parent.
- Pupils arriving after 9:10am and without a satisfactory explanation will be marked 'Late' as Code U. This national code counts as an unauthorised absence.
- Pupils who arrive late after the school start times, should report first to the main office, where a record will be made of the time the pupil arrives. The register entry will then be amended in accordance with the details above. The school will accurately record the arrival time of each pupil.
- Accurate tracking of late arrival will take place. Parent/carers will always be informed in writing of the school's concerns over late arrival and action taken by the school to intervene with parent/carers to ensure the pattern of late attendance does not continue.
- Where pupils continue with patterns of unauthorised late attendance despite intervention by the school (usually ten late arrivals within a term), a referral will

be made to the Education Welfare Service for investigation into the circumstances of the late attendance and casework intervention. Appropriate sanctions such as Penalty Notice warning letters, Penalty Notices (one per parent per child) and the possibility of court proceedings will be enforced where necessary.

If a pupil is just five minutes late daily, it accounts for three lost learning days a year.

Authorised/unauthorised absence

All staff within the school will adhere to the same criteria when deciding whether or not to authorise an absence. Absences should be recorded in accordance with the Attendance Codes issued by the Department for Education.

Examples of when absence may be authorised:

- An absence for sickness for which the school has granted leave;
- Religious or cultural observances for which the school has granted leave;
- The pupil is the child of Traveller parents and the conditions stated in the Education Act 1966 Section 444(6) are met;
- An absence due to a family emergency;
- The pupil is excluded and appropriate information and paperwork have been forwarded to the parent.

When deciding whether to authorise an absence, the school will need to consider if there are special, individual or exceptional circumstances for the request. Requests for leave will not be granted immediately before and during assessment periods. Nor will leave be granted for children whose attendance record already shows unauthorised absence or where their absence record is already above 10% for any reason.

Medical appointments should be arranged outside of the school day. Where this is not possible and a pupil is required to leave during the school day, they must be signed out by a parent/carer. Pupils must attend school before and after the appointment if at all possible.

Approved Educational Activity

Children who are educated off-site or who are engaged in supervised educational activities away from school premises, such as school residential trips, day visits to secondary schools or curriculum enrichment activities at local secondary schools are marked as present.

The school will not record pupils who are off-site as present unless confirmation has been received of their attendance.

Unauthorised Absence

Any absence taken without the permission of the Head of School will be recorded as unauthorised absence. It is for the Head of School and not the parent to make the decision as to whether the absence should be authorised. It is the parent's responsibility to provide all evidence of absence.

Holidays in Term Time

St Chad's CE primary School, our aim is to prepare children for their future lives and careers. With this in mind, we require parents/carers to observe the holiday pattern of for your child's school. (Available on the school website).

Following the September 2013 amendment to The Education (Pupil Registration) (England)Regulations 2006, Headteachers no longer have the discretion to authorise holidays during term time. Only in exceptional circumstances can schools authorise leave absence. Consideration is given to each request and each case will be judged on its merits. The decision is final and once the decision is taken to not authorise leave, it cannot be authorised retrospectively.

If the absence is not authorised and the holiday is taken anyway, the case will be referred to the Attendance Service who will issue a Penalty Notice as follows:

- **First Offence**: £80 if paid within 21 days, or £160 if paid within 28 days *(per parent, per child)*
- **Second Offence** (within 3 years): A flat rate of £160 *(per parent, per child)*
- **Third and Subsequent Offences**: A Penalty Notice will not be issued; instead, the case may be presented to the Magistrates' Court.

If a fine is not paid within 28 days, or for repeat offences, Oldham Council can refer the case to the Magistrates' Court. In court, parents can face a fine of up to £2,500 for each parent, for each child.

Procedures for following up absence

Absences should be explained by parents to the school on the first day of absence prior to 9:00am. Notes, letters and telephone messages will be retained by the school with dates and times if appropriate to ensure evidence is available for recording purposes and any legal intervention taken by the Local Authority's Education Welfare Service. All verbal conversations should be recorded with date, time and names of staff and parents involved for the same reason.

To ensure the safety of children, where parents have not contacted the school prior to 9.00am, the school will operate their first day contact procedures.
Where there are concerns as to the safety or welfare of a child, the school will endeavour to contact parents via an immediate home visit. This may be done in conjunction with Education Welfare Service, Children's Social Care, Health or the Police where appropriate.

Failure to respond within five days to absence telephone calls, letters or home visits will result in an immediate referral to the Education Welfare Service for investigation.

Where possible, parents should always confirm in writing the reason for absence. School monitors the absence and punctuality of all its pupils. St Chad's has a stepped approach to taking action but recognises that it will not always be appropriate to progress through all of these steps or even to carry them out in the order listed. Each case will be considered on an individual basis but may include one or more of the following:

- Discussion with Attendance Service to identify pupils with attendance below 90% for monitoring trends in attendance and lateness;
- Request from school for parent/carer to meet with school staff;
- Initiate the process, if appropriate, to access support from other agencies;
- Referral to Attendance Service.

Local Authority Action (Attendance Service)

Where there is no improvement in a pupil's attendance and there are at least 10 sessions (5 days) absence in a term, the school must consider local authority referral.

Action for Low Attendance

98%+ Excellent – Well Done! This will help all aspects of your child's progress and life in school. This will give them a good start in life and supports a positive work ethic.

97%-96% Average – Strive to build on this. Work to promote full attendance.

95%-94% Satisfactory– Absence may now be affecting attainment and progress at school. School may contact parents directly to seek ways of working together to improve attendance.

Below 94% Unacceptable – Absence is causing serious concern. It is affecting attainment and progress and is disrupting the child's learning. Meetings between home and school to share strategies for improvement may be called. In most cases if improvement is not achieved a referral will be made to the Attendance Service-Education Welfare Service (EWO).

Non – attendance is an important issue that is treated seriously. However, each case is different and the school acknowledges that no one standard response will be appropriate in every case. Consideration is given to all factors affecting attendance before deciding what intervention strategies to apply.

Prior to the engagement of the EWO, the school will usually issue letters to parents clearly defining its concerns. It is hoped that a quick response and change in levels of absence will prevent the need for EWO involvement.

Children missing from education or who may otherwise be at risk

The school will follow the procedures set out in the Children Missing from Education Policy and Procedures. It is important that parents/carers inform the school if they move house and/or area etc, giving full details of any new address and the proposed school. The Education Welfare Service will follow up all pupils who are believed to have left the area. The school and the Education Welfare Service will make 'reasonable' enquiries to locate the pupil. No pupil will be removed from the school roll until the Education Welfare Service has agreed this.

Strategies for Promoting Attendance

- The school will offer an environment in which pupils feel valued and welcome. Each school's ethos must demonstrate that pupils feel that their presence in school is important, that they will be missed when they are absent/late and that follow up action will always be taken. Early intervention is often the key to preventing more frequent absences.
- Attendance data will be regularly collected and analysed in order to help identify patterns, set targets, correlate attendance with achievement and support and inform policy/practice.
- Good attendance will be praised appropriately.
- Parents will be reminded regularly (via newsletters, parents' evening, etc) of the importance of good attendance.
- Pupils who are absent through sickness for any extended period of time will (when appropriate) have work sent home to them and will be reintegrated back into school upon their return.
- Pupils who have been absent for whatever reason for an extended period of time will (when appropriate) have individually tailored reintegration programmes prepared for them.
- The Attendance Lead for the school will have regular meetings with the Education Welfare Officer in order to identify and support those pupils who are experiencing attendance difficulties.
- The school will regularly analyse their data so that early identification can be made of pupil's absence and especially those who are persistent absentees (or in danger of becoming a persistent absentee – PA). A pupil is considered to be a PA pupil if they miss 10% or more of their possible sessions.
- The school will regularly analyse attendance statistics in order to ensure effective strategies are in place to support pupils in raising attainment and attendance.

Safeguarding

Attendance is a safeguarding issue. It is therefore vital that all registers are marked correctly and up to date.