



## POLICY FOR ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY

### 1. OVERVIEW

Children need to attend school in order to receive their educational entitlement and to make the most of that education. Children regularly arriving late have their education, and that of their peers, interrupted. This affects the positive start to the day we want for all our children. Children with regular absence miss continuity of teaching and their progress can be significantly impaired.

Rightly, parents hold the school to account for the quality of education provided. Likewise the school will hold parents to account for supporting their child's learning and ensuring they come to school promptly each day and do not take time off school unless there are legitimate reasons. An attendance rate of 90% equates to a half day absence a week and is unacceptable.

#### Aims

- To aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.
- To provide a framework, with agreed roles and responsibilities.
- To rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.
- To develop positive and consistent communication between home and school, including set procedures for attendance information.
- To remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school.
- Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention: a penalty notice in line with the National Framework or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.
- To promote effective partnership with the Education Welfare Service and other agencies.

### 2. LEGISLATION AND GUIDANCE

This policy is based on the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on [working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\)](#) and [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). The guidance is based on the following pieces of legislation, which set out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of the [Education Act 1996](#)
- Part 3 of the [Education Act 2002](#)
- Part 7 of the [Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)

- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, and 2016 amendments\)](#)
- [The School Attendance \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2024](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013 and the 2024 amendment](#)

It also refers to:

- [School census guidance](#)
- [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)
- [Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools](#)

### 3. PUNCTUALITY

Doors open for children at 8:45am and children then come into school and straight to their classroom. Children in Darwin's Den wrap-a-round care will go to classes at 8:40am. Doors will be locked at 9.00am. Children arriving after that time must come into school via the main entrance and be signed in the Late Book.

- Start of day activities begin at 8:45am and the class registers close at 9:05am. Children arriving between 9.05am and 9.15am will be recorded as 'L' late, children arriving after this time will be marked absent for the whole of the first session (morning).

A recurring record of lateness may result in a family being set punctuality targets alongside academic targets.

- If a child is late after registers have officially closed at 9.15am, the absence will be marked as unauthorised 'U'

### 4. ABSENCE

We will only authorise absences due to Exceptional Circumstances such as:

- \* genuine illness
- \* medical or dental appointments (please if at all possible these should be made outside of school time)
- \* close family bereavements
- \* religious observance days
- \* other exceptional circumstances – see below (term time leave of absence)

- We operate a 'first day' response system. In practice this means that parents are requested to telephone school using the dedicated answering machine on the first morning of their child's absence.

• Staff have SIMS in the classroom and do the registers electronically. Registers are checked daily and if there has been no message to say why a pupil is absent then a 1st text will be sent; a note is then placed next to the mark on the electronic register in SIMS. Any telephone messages giving reasons for absences will be recorded in the Absence Book.

- Registers are checked regularly by the admin staff, class teachers and Senior Leadership Team. Any patterns of absence or unexplained absence are noted and parents notified by an email of concern in the first instance followed by a telephone call to offer school support.
- Parents requesting Leave of Absence for any reason other than medical

must apply in writing, in advance. Please complete a 'Leave of Absence Request Form' **See Appendix 2**. See guidance below.

- If your child is off sick for a consecutive period of 5 days or more, we will require a written letter explaining reason for absence on your child's return. If the absence is long-term or repeated, we may request proof that your child is genuinely unwell and unable to attend school.
- All leave of absence is at the Headteacher's discretion. The Headteacher will make that decision in line with guidance from the Local Authority and Department of Education.

### **Family Holidays During Term Time**

Parents/carers are strongly discouraged from taking a family holiday during term time. Current government guidelines on holidays during term time are very clear – Headteacher are not permitted to authorise except under very exceptional circumstances.

Families wishing to take holidays during term time will need to complete a '*Leave of Absence Request Form*' for authorisation by the Headteacher.

After receiving a written request for an absence of leave from a parent/carer the Headteacher will consider whether the circumstances of the request are 'exceptional' and communicate to the parent/carer if their request has been approved or not.

If a leave of absence goes ahead after a request for approval has been declined, the absence will be recorded on the pupil's registration record as unauthorised and a fixed penalty may be served.

### **Fixed Penalty Notices**

#### **National Framework for Penalty Notices for School Attendance**

A new National Framework for Penalty Notices for School Absence came into effect from the 19<sup>th</sup> August 2024. A penalty notice is an out of court settlement which is intended to cause improved attendance without the need for a criminal prosecution. The National Framework includes:

- A single consistent national threshold for when a penalty notice must be considered of 10 sessions (usually equivalent to 5 school days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10 school week period. The three-year period begins from the date of the first penalty notice issued on or after 19 August 2024.
- Unauthorised absence sessions can be consecutive (e.g. 10 sessions of holiday in one week) or sporadic (e.g. 6 sessions of unauthorised absence in 1 week and 1 per week for the next 4 weeks). The 10 school week period may span different terms or school years.
- The option of using a 'Notice to Improve' where support is appropriate to provide a final opportunity to engage with support to prevent a penalty notice being issued.

- The first penalty notice issued to the parent for that pupil will be charged at £160 if paid within 28 days reducing to £80 if paid within 21 days. (this is less than an inflationary rise since 2013)
- Where it is deemed appropriate to issue a second penalty notice to the same parent for the same pupil within 3 years of the first notice, the second notice is charged at a flat rate of £160 if paid within 28 days.
- A third penalty notice must not be issued within a 3 year period. Therefore, in cases where the threshold is met for a third (or subsequent) times within those 3 years, a penalty notice cannot be issued and alternative action should be taken instead. This will often include considering prosecution, but may include other tools such as one of the other attendance legal interventions.

### Notices to improve

If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate, but parents do not engage with offers of support, the school may offer a notice to improve to give parents a final chance to engage with support.

Notices to improve will be issued in line with processes set out in the local code of conduct for the local authority area in which the pupil attends school.

They will include:

- Details of the pupil's attendance record and of the offences
- The benefits of regular attendance and the duty of parents under [section 7 of the Education Act 1996](#)
- Details of the support provided so far
- Opportunities for further support, or to access previously provided support that was not engaged with
- A clear warning that a penalty notice may be issued if attendance doesn't improve within the improvement period, along with details of what sufficient improvement looks like, which will be decided on a case-by-case basis
- A clear timeframe of between 3 and 6 weeks for the improvement period
- The grounds on which a penalty notice may be issued before the end of the improvement period

## 5. MONITORING

The SBM, Clerical Officer and SLT monitor the attendance of pupils where this is a cause for concern, recording absences on CPOMs. School also conducts monthly monitoring of attendance through registers and the late book and those children that fall in to the 'Red' zone will be contacted by letter/email. **See Appendix 1.** Children whose attendance is below par will be brought to the attention of the Headteacher. Likewise any teacher or adult working in school concerned about any child's attendance should disclose this to the Headteacher.

Regular absence will be investigated and followed up. Initially parents will receive an email informing them their child's attendance is being monitored and offering the opportunity to discuss their child's attendance.

Mrs Sharon Ronald is the school Attendance Champion and she can be contacted using the email [deputy@charlesdarwin.cheshire.sch.uk](mailto:deputy@charlesdarwin.cheshire.sch.uk)

Admin staff are supported by the LA Educational Welfare Officer in monitoring attendance.

## 6. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Children with specific medical needs, preventing good attendance at school, will have this taken into account if a request for exceptional additional leave is requested.

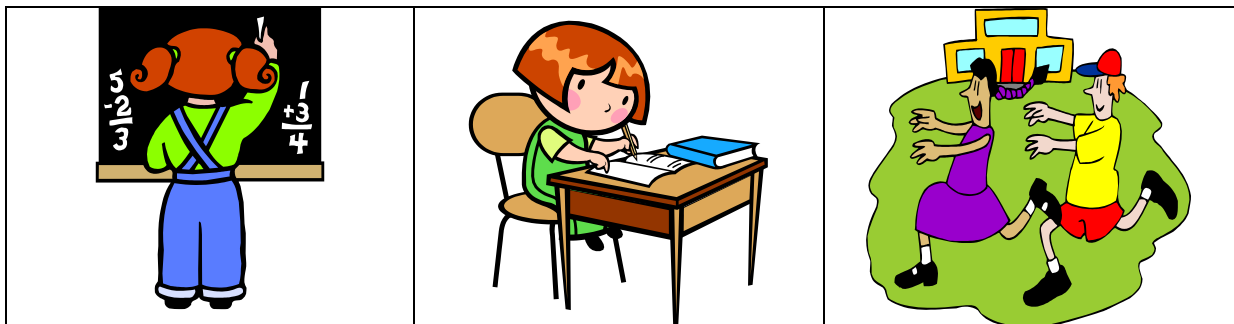
Where children have exceptional medical needs they may need to arrive late regularly. Their registration time may be adjusted at the discretion of the head teacher.

Teachers will provide school work to be completed at home only under exceptional circumstances where a child's medical condition necessitates a prolonged absence from school and whose parents or carers request it.

Requests for absence for cultural/religious holidays and celebrations outside the normal school holiday may be respected as long as a child's general attendance is acceptable (usually 95% and above).

### Appendix 1

## ATTENDANCE REALLY DOES MATTER



**Did you know that:**

- 90% Attendance means 4 WHOLE WEEKS off school.

**This level of attendance is not good. 90% means your child will struggle with their school work because they have the equivalent of 1 day off every fortnight!**

- 17 days off school every year means your child will probably obtain a WHOLE GRADE LOWER in their exams than they are really capable of.

**Do you really want this for your child?**

**If your child's attendance is above 95% you are giving them the opportunity to achieve and succeed...**

...not just now but throughout their lives!

So, what can we do about it, together?

At the end of this school year, your child's attendance will be categorised into Red, Amber or Green zone.

Every term that attendance will be re-categorised and reported to you.

	<p><b>Red</b></p> <p><b>Amber</b></p> <p><b>Green</b></p>	<p><b>Danger Zone</b></p> <p><b>At Risk Zone</b></p> <p><b>Safety Zone</b></p>	<p><b>Below 92%</b></p> <p><b>Between 92% and 95%</b></p> <p><b>Between 95%-100%</b></p>
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**Our aim is for all children to have at least 95% for both attendance and punctuality and be in the "green safety zone"**

**Where absence is in the green zone but there are unauthorised absences, a green zone email will be sent home to alert you.**

**If your child's attendance falls below 95%**

**They will be in the "amber at risk zone"**

**You will receive an amber zone email and we will monitor your child's attendance and punctuality and hope to see an improvement in the coming month.**

**If your child's attendance falls below 90%**

**They will be in the "red danger zone"**

**When your child's attendance falls below 92%, we will contact you to discuss how we may support you further and make the improvements necessary. If attendance falls below 90% we will meet with you to agree an attendance support plan and we may refer the matter to our Education Welfare Office.**

## Appendix 2



### Charles Darwin Community Primary School

#### LEAVE OF ABSENCE REQUEST FORM

*In exceptional circumstances, parents can request authorisation for leave of absence from school for their child, from the Headteacher*  
***We urge parents to consider any request for absence carefully and if at all possible make alternative arrangements.***

Child's name \_\_\_\_\_

Class teacher \_\_\_\_\_

First day of absence \_\_\_\_\_ day \_\_\_\_\_ month \_\_\_\_\_ year

Return to school \_\_\_\_\_ day \_\_\_\_\_ month \_\_\_\_\_ year

Number of school days that will be missed \_\_\_\_\_

Reasons for requesting term time leave:

N.B. Requests cannot be considered for authorisation unless reasons are given.

#### FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

Current % attendance

An attendance rate of 95% and above is generally considered good. Persistent absence is defined as an attendance rate of 90% or below. *(Missing school could*

*make your child fall behind in lessons and could impact on their academic progress and achievement)*

The leave of absence above is authorised /unauthorised

<u>Notes</u>
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**\*\*Please note that if your request is unauthorised, you may be issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice Fine.**

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Mrs M Bennett - Headteacher

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



## Appendix 3

Dear Parent/Carer

### **National Framework for Penalty Notices for School Attendance**

A new National Framework for Penalty Notices for School Absence will come into effect from the 19<sup>th</sup> August 2024. A penalty notice is an out of court settlement which is intended to cause improved attendance without the need for a criminal prosecution.

The National Framework aims to:

- **Make penalty notices more effective** by ensuring they are only used in cases where they are the most appropriate tool.
- **Prioritise the support first approach** by expecting support to be used in cases where it is appropriate.
- **Improve consistency in the use of penalty notices across England** by introducing a new national threshold at which they are considered.
- **Improve the deterrent effect of a penalty notice** by increasing the amount and introducing a new national limit of 2 penalty notices within a 3 year period.

The National Framework includes:

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- Unauthorised absence sessions can be consecutive (e.g. 10 sessions of holiday in one week) or sporadic (e.g. 6 sessions of unauthorised absence in 1 week and 1 per week for the next 4 weeks). The 10 school week period may span different terms or school years.
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- A third penalty notice must not be issued within a 3 year period. Therefore, in cases where the threshold is met for a third (or subsequent) times within those 3 years, a penalty notice cannot be issued and alternative action should be taken instead. This will often include considering prosecution, but may include other tools such as one of the other attendance legal interventions.

The penalty notice system is not a money making scheme and local authorities do not have income targets. Monies should be first used for the administration of the penalty notice system and prosecution. Any revenues collected through the system must be ring fenced for attendance and any surplus must be paid to the Secretary of State.

If you're having trouble getting your child to go to school, the school will discuss attendance problems with you and should agree a plan with you to improve your child's attendance.

The Council offers support through Team around the Family (TAF) and Live Well.

[Home | Live Well Cheshire West \(cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk\)](https://cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk)

**Date consulted December 2024**

**Marianne Bennett**  
Headteacher

**Alison Massey**  
Chair of Governors