

Archbishop Courtenay Primary School ATTENDANCE POLICY

This policy reflects the vision and aims of Archbishop Courtenay Primary School by

- ❖ Encouraging staff, parents and children to maximise the learning experience in order that all children reach their full potential.
- ❖ Providing clear procedures for involving parents relating to school attendance.

Principles

Regular and punctual attendance is of paramount importance in ensuring that all children have full access to the curriculum. Valuable learning time is lost when children are absent or late.

Children should be at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. It is the legal responsibility of the parent to ensure that children attend school.

Children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse.

Every half-day absence has to be classified by the school, (not by the parents), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required, preferably in writing.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a reason such as genuine illness or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This includes:

- ❖ ***parents keeping children off school unnecessarily e.g. shopping, birthdays***
- ❖ ***truancy before or during the school day***
- ❖ ***absences which have never been properly explained***
- ❖ ***children who arrive at school late.***

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with

the staff in resolving any problems together. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) from the Local Authority. The EWO will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed, these Officers can use court proceedings to prosecute parents. The maximum penalty on conviction is currently a fine of £2500 and/or 51 weeks imprisonment.

Procedures

The school applies the following procedures in deciding how to deal with individual absences:

Parents are asked to notify the school before registration closes if a child will not be attending school. However the school operates a first-day calling system and will make telephone contact with parents to find out why a pupil is absent. If a child continues to be absent we expect parents to inform us. Nevertheless, if this does not happen we will telephone to check.

Where a child has been absent but no reason is given, a letter is sent home asking for an explanation. If none is received, the absence is marked as unauthorized. It is not usually appropriate for the school to authorise absences for shopping, looking after other children, day trips, birthdays etc. Leave may, however, be granted in an emergency (e.g. bereavement) or for medical appointments which must be in school time.

Leave of absence in school time

The Governing body may permit up to 10 days authorised absence in exceptional circumstances. However, it is not desirable that any leave of absence is taken in school time as this breaks the continuity of learning for children.

Parents wishing to take children out of school should apply in writing to the Headteacher, for permission to take time out of school at least six weeks before the leave is to be taken. Parents should have permission for the leave before making leave arrangements. The attendance record of a child will be taken into consideration if a parent applies for holiday in school time. For example, a child with attendance in the previous year below 90% or current attendance issues should not be granted leave in school time. Any leave taken without permission will be unauthorised.

Information about individual school targets, projects and special initiatives

The Local Authority requires that annual absence targets are set and monitored by each school. At Archbishop Courtenay Primary School annual absence targets are set each autumn and approved by the Governing Body and School Improvement Partner. Benchmarking of attendance, based upon the number of children having free school meals is used to guide the target setting process.

Attendance is monitored on a monthly basis by the school leadership team, supported by the EWO, to identify pupils at risk from poor attendance.

Good attendance is celebrated in school. Certificates are given to children and there is a cup presented to the class with the best rate of attendance at the end of terms 2, 4 and 6. At the end of the school year, certificates and prizes are awarded to children whose attendance is 95% or better.

In the first instance of poor attendance (below 95%), contact with parents is made by our Family Liaison Officer unless the reason for low attendance is known to be due to a child's illness. It is often found that this contact and support is enough to improve attendance and may provide help with specific issues.

If attendance does not improve, the Headteacher will send a letter to parents, advising them of the level of attendance and the impact this has on a child's progress. The letter will also advise that the school may refer to the EWO.

If absence falls to 85% or below the absence is regarded as persistent and will be referred by school to the EWO for support.

Those people responsible for attendance matters in this school are:

Headteacher	Mrs Louise Stubberfield
FLO	Mrs Tracy Gooding
EWO	Mr James Allen
Governor	Mrs Mollie Neaves

Summary

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend. School staff are committed to working with parents as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

Signed

Date (agreed Nov 2009)