

## Attendance Policy Corsham Regis Primary Academy

**Date: September 2022**

**Next Review Date: September 2023**

### Legal Responsibilities

The legal framework governing attendance is set by the Education Acts and their associated regulations.

#### **Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that: -**

parents must ensure their children are educated. For most parents/carers this means registering their child at a school and ensuring their regular attendance. Failure to do so can result in the issue of a Penalty Notice or being prosecuted.

The parent/carer of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him / her to receive efficient, full time education suitable to his / her age, aptitude and ability and to any special educational needs he / she may have either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

Section 444 further states that: - "If a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at school, his / her parent is guilty of an offence" which is punishable by law. An offence is not committed if it can be demonstrated that: -

- the pupil was absent with leave (authorised absence).
- the pupil was ill or prevented from attending by unavoidable cause.
- the absence occurred on a day set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil / parents/carers belong.
- the school is not within the prescribed walking distance of the child's home and the Local Authority has made no suitable transport arrangements. The law relating to 'walking distance' effectively is defined as two miles for children under eight and three miles for all other pupils.
- a limited defence is available to the parents/carers of travelling children.

By law schools are required:

- To take an attendance register twice a day: at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon
- To report to the LA pupils who fail to attend regularly or who are absent for ten consecutive school days or more without known reason

By law the attendance register must show for every session, whether a pupil is present, absent, attending approved educational activity or unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

Authorised absence is where the school has given approval in advance for a pupil of compulsory school age to be away, or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as a satisfactory justification for the absence. All other absences are unauthorised.

There is a Wiltshire Local Authority Attendance Policy which provides guidance for schools. It is the responsibility of the Education Welfare Service in discharging the statutory duties of the Local Authority in respect of non-attendance at school.

## Registration

Staff are aware of the importance of maintaining registers and are issued with guidelines for their marking. This is to ensure consistency throughout the school as pointed out in the DfE document. (Appendix A)

Registers will be taken at: Morning: 09.00  
Afternoon: 13.15

If children arrive at school after 9.10 but before 9.30 entries are recorded as late.

***Registers will close 30 minutes after these times and any entries after will be recorded as unauthorised unless for medical appointments. The Act also places a legal obligation on: -***

- the Local Authority to enforce attendance
- schools to register attendance and notify the Local Authority (or the Educational Welfare Service) of a child's absence from school without authorisation of 10 or more days
- the governing body to make sure that school registers are kept, one for attendance and one for admissions.
- the academy will endeavour to reach its target of 96% attendance for the year

## Introduction

The governors and staff of Corsham Regis Primary Academy believe that attendance is of the greatest importance if pupils are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. Irregular attendance undermines the educational process and leads to educational disadvantage. It puts children at risk and can result in children being drawn into patterns of anti-social or criminal behaviour.

We recognise that pupils may not be attending for a variety of reasons, some of which are outside the immediate control of the academy, but we intend to pursue actively the goal of regular attendance. Individual absences will be carefully investigated, and pupils and parents/carers left in no doubt that an unjustified absence cannot be tolerated.

## Philosophy

Corsham Regis Primary Academy is committed to providing a full and efficient educational experience to all pupils. We believe that, if pupils are to benefit from education, punctuality and good attendance is crucial. As an academy, we will organise and do all we can to ensure maximum attendance for all pupils. Any problems that impede punctuality and regular attendance will be identified and addressed as speedily as possible.

Our academy will give a high priority to conveying to parents/carers and pupils the importance of regular and punctual attendance. We recognise that parents/carers have a vital role to play and there is a need to establish strong home-academy links and communication systems that can be utilised whenever there is concern about attendance.

If there are problems that affect a pupil's attendance we will investigate, identify and strive, in partnership with parents/carers and pupils, to resolve those problems as quickly and efficiently as possible. We will always adopt a clearly focused approach aimed at returning the pupil to full attendance.

Attendance is an important part of keeping children safe.

## Parent/Carer-Academy Partnership – roles and responsibilities:

- The Headteacher has overall responsibility for improving and maintaining good attendance but delegates this responsibility to a senior staff member.
- The Senior Teacher Leading Inclusion is the designated member of senior staff for attendance and is responsible for maintaining the profile of attendance through assemblies, staff meetings, monitoring, registration process, liaison with the Education Welfare Officer (EWO), parent/carers

contact, school attendance meetings, attending Local Authority Attendance Meetings (LAAM) and taking seriously problems that lead to non-attendance.

- Class teachers are responsible for accurate registration using agreed codes – see Appendix A
- A governor has a specific responsibility for attendance (currently Mr Chris Denton) and reports any significant points back to the Corsham Regis Local Governing Body (CRLGB) with regular attendance updates being provided to the CRLGB via the Headteacher through fortnightly monitoring and reporting
- Administrative staff initiate first day contact procedures and maintain records of attendance on SIMs
- Parents/carers are responsible for ensuring that children attend and stay at school every day. It is also the parents'/carers' responsibility to ensure that children arrive on time, properly attired, safely and in a condition to learn. As partners with the Academy, in their child's education, they need to instil in their children a respect for education and for those who deliver it. In addition, parents/carers are responsible for ensuring that children are collected on time and arrive home safely. Expectations for pupil attendance are described in the Attendance Leaflet and Parent Handbook which are given to all parents/carers when their child starts at Regis. Copies of both documents can also be found on the Corsham Regis Primary Academy website.

## **Principles**

The academy will: -

- encourage, recognise and reward excellent attendance
- ensure that all staff are aware of the registration procedures and receive in-service training on registration regulations and education law
- complete registers accurately at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session
- ensure that all parents / carers submit the necessary personal information for the child and family on admission, including two contact details as prescribed by Keeping Children safe in Education September 2018
- stress to parents / carers the importance of contacting the school office early on the first day of absence
- promote positive staff attitudes to pupils returning after absence
- ensure regular evaluation of attendance procedures as part of the School Improvement Plan. This will be monitored by the governors responsible
- work towards ensuring that all pupils feel supported and valued. We will send a clear message that, if a pupil is absent, he / she will be missed
- have in place procedures that allow absentees to catch up on missed work without disrupting the learning of other class members.

## **Reporting Absence**

It is the parents'/carers' responsibility to notify the academy of the reason for a child's absence as soon as possible.

- A telephone call or note to the office on the first day of absence explaining the reason is required. This note will be kept in the register and used to account for all absences that must be reported annually by law.
- The academy will call home on the first day of absence if a phone call or note with sibling has not been received.
- If on the child's return to school, no explanatory note has been received then the school will send a standard letter home.
- The academy will send a second letter and talk to parents/carers if an explanation has still not

been received three days after letter was sent

- Parents/Carers are expected to notify the academy of any home circumstances that might affect the behaviour and learning of their child.
- Parents/Carers must also notify the academy of any changes to contact details. It is a statutory requirement that the school has two up to date contact numbers for a pupil on roll
- A register audit will be undertaken by the Senior Teacher Leading Inclusion 3 times a year to identify poor attendance.
- At the end of each term, letters will be sent to parents/carers of children with poor attendance and a school attendance meeting will be convened if attendance does not improve. In exceptional circumstances where this has no effect on the attendance of the child a meeting with the EWO (Educational Welfare Officer) may be convened. This meeting will include a senior member of staff, parent/carer and the EWO. The aim of this meeting will be to identify and resolve the difficulties, which are preventing the pupil from attending school. The parents/carers will be made aware of the legal requirements regarding school attendance. If the percentage of unauthorised absence falls below the national average, then a fine may be incurred.
- The academy will help the pupil's re-integration where a pupil is returning to school after an absence of longer than two weeks. In the event of a pupil returning after a long-term absence then an Individual Reintegration Programme (IRP) will be implemented. The IRP will include all members of the academy staff and will be designed to be as supportive of the pupil as possible.

### **Strategies for improving and maintaining good attendance**

In order to ensure good attendance, we use the following strategies:

- Incentives and rewards for individual pupils, classes or year groups with excellent or improving attendance
- a centrally located attendance display
- Sensitivity to the needs of individual pupils
- Raising awareness of attendance at induction and through reporting to parents
- Attendance audits which help to identify categories of non-attendance and enable targeting through specific strategies
- Regular attendance data monitoring using SIMs
- Ensuring the personal information held for all pupils on SIMs is up to date
- Links with other policies – bullying, behaviour, equal opportunities, special educational needs and disabilities

### **Educational Welfare Service**

Local Authorities are charged in law with enforcing school attendance of pupils of compulsory school age.

Educational Welfare Officers (EWOs) are employed to help them carry out these responsibilities. Our EWO is Maxine Garner, who has a good knowledge of the academy and its catchment area.

It is our legal duty to report to the Local Authority those pupils who fail to attend regularly, except where those absences are covered by a medical certificate. Where a child's attendance falls below 80% they will automatically be referred to the Educational Welfare Service (EWS). Where attendance drops below 90% letters will be sent from the school with a note to improve attendance. A failure to improve will also result in a referral to the EWS. Late arrival at school is always logged and persistent lateness is referred to the EWS. Where children are repeatedly collected late from school a meeting with the Senior Teacher for Inclusion will occur. The EWO is consulted where we are in any doubt as to whether an absence is justified or not.

It is also our legal duty to report as Missing in Education to the Local Authority any pupil absence of more than two weeks where no contact has been made to inform the academy of the reasons for this absence. This is a potential safeguarding issue which could indicate neglect, abuse and / or child sexual exploitation.

## **Categorisation of Absence**

Every half day absence from the academy must be classified by the SLT as either authorised or unauthorised. Clear guidance is given in the DfE's document on whether an absence is authorised or unauthorised. Lateness, illness, medical and dental appointments, shopping, minding the house, looking after younger brother or sister, special occasions and family holidays are all outlined in detail.

The table below provides a general overview.

<b>Authorised absences</b> are mornings or afternoons away from the academy for a good reason such as:	<b>Unauthorised absences</b> are those which the academy does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Genuine illness</li><li>• Medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time</li><li>• Days of significant observance</li><li>• Exceptional family circumstances such as bereavement</li><li>• Approved sporting activity</li><li>• Approved educational activity such as examinations, educational visits, visiting a new school</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Parents/carers unnecessarily keeping children off school</li><li>• Truancy during the school day</li><li>• Absences which have never been properly explained</li><li>• Children who arrive at the academy too late to get a mark</li><li>• Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays</li><li>• Day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed</li></ul>

In some cases, it is for the academy to decide whether the absence is authorised or not, depending on the circumstances of a particular case, but the overriding principle must be that it is the academy **which authorises the absence and not the parent/carer**. A parental note or telephone call does not in itself oblige the academy to accept it. Parentally condoned, unjustified absence can be every bit as damaging as traditional forms of truancy.

If a parent/carer wishes to take a pupil out of school for a holiday during term time, they should refer to the Leave of Absence policy

## **Children Leaving During the School Day**

Academy staff must know where the children are during the school day.

- Children are not allowed to leave the premises without prior permission from the academy
- Whenever possible, parents/carers should try to arrange medical and other appointments outside of school time
- Parents/carers are requested to confirm in writing, letter or email the reason for any planned absence, the time of leaving and the expected time of return, and/or provide a copy of the appointment letter for medical appointments
- Children must be signed out on leaving the academy and be signed back in on their return
- Where a child is being collected from the academy, parents/carers are to report to the Administration Office before the child can leave the site
- If a child leaves the academy site without permission the Police will be informed and then their parents informed that the police have been told.

## **Reporting to Parents/Carers**

Annual Reports to Parents/Carers must show the number of unauthorised absences since the last report and the possible consequences of these on the child's education. Unauthorised absence is that not authorised by the academy; parents/carers are not allowed to authorise absence.

The Local Authority's recommendation to all schools is that the interpretation of "any year" should be by

calendar year, thereby stopping the possibility of parents/carers having two weeks off in July plus two weeks in September.

Parents/carers wishing to take holiday in school time must fill in a Leave of absence form available from the office.

### **Communicating the contents of the Attendance Policy**

This policy will be available on the Corsham Regis Primary Academy website. Paper copies will be made available to parents/carers if they request it, free of charge.

This policy will also be given to all new parents/carers when their child is first registered at the school.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of procedures and strategies, the attendance policy is monitored annually in the Autumn Term by the Senior Leadership Team and CRLGB.

Appendix A - *The following suggested codes for categorisation of absence are taken from "School Attendance and the Role of the Education Welfare Service 1997".*

#### **PRESENT**

/\ The presence of a pupil who has arrived at school on time should be marked by a black oblique stroke.

The presence of a pupil who has arrived at school late, but while the register remains open should be marked by the symbol L within a red circle.

#### **AUTHORISED ABSENCE (ZERO WITH APPROPRIATE CODE WITHIN IT)**

- B Pupil attending another institution under a formalised dual registration arrangement.
- C Other circumstances (bereavement, agreed special occasions, performances, other approved absences not covered by other codes).
- D Dual Registration.
- E Excluded.
- H Family holiday (for which leave has been granted).
- I Illness.
- M Medical and dental appointments, confirmed illness.
- N No reason yet provided.
- P Approved sporting activity.
- R Day of religious observance for the religious body to which the parents belong.

- S Approved study leave.
- T Traveller child travelling.
- V Educational visit or trip (UK/overseas).
- W Approved work experience.
- X School closed to pupils

#### **UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE**

- O Main marking for unauthorised absence.
- L Late (before registration closes).
- U Late after register closes

If it is necessary to prioritise the acceptance of referrals, the Education Welfare Officer will give priority to those cases when the absence has been unauthorised.

(If a pupil's absence has been authorised by the school the Local Authority cannot cite that absence as evidence of non-attendance under Section 444 of the Education Act