Walkwood
Church of England Middle School

Attendance Policy

Governing Body Committee responsible:		Ethos, Inclusion and Care	
Approval granted:	2 March 2020	Review date:	Spring 2022

"May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power, and may you be prepared to endure everything with patience, while joyfully giving thanks."

Colossians 1:11

"Church of England Schools have at their heart a belief that all children are loved by God, are individually unique and that the school has a mission to help each pupil to fulfil their potential in all aspects of their personhood: physically, academically, socially, morally and spiritually. Schools have a duty to try to remove any factor that might represent a hindrance to a child's fulfilment. We want all pupils to want to engage in learning in a safe and welcoming ethos."

Valuing All God's Children, Church of England, 2014

"The core purpose of any Church school is to maximise the learning potential of every pupil within the love of God." *SIAMS (Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools) 2012*

Aims and Principles

Promoting good attendance is a priority for this school. Regular attendance is a pre-requisite for pupil achievement. Where attendance fails, either with long term absence or frequent occasional absences, a pupil's attainment suffers through missed lessons and experiences. This, together with the lack of opportunity to form social relationships with his/her peers can lead to increased patterns of non-attendance.

The school will record and monitor attendance in accordance both with the statutory requirements and with the principle that regular, uninterrupted attendance is vital to a child's educational progress.

"Central to raising standards in education and ensuring all pupils can fulfil their potential is an assumption so widely understood that it is insufficiently stated – pupils need to attend school regularly to benefit from their education. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school." (*School attendance: Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities, September 2018*)

The government expects (*School attendance, September 2018*):

- schools to promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence;
- schools to ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled;
- schools to act early to address patterns of absence.
- parents to perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly.
- All pupils to be punctual to their lessons.

Expected First Day of Attendance

Our school shall enter pupils on the admission register and attendance register from the beginning of the first day on which the school has agreed, or been notified, that the pupil will attend Walkwood. For most pupils the expected first day of attendance is the first day of the school year.

If a pupil fails to attend on the agreed or notified date, we shall endeavour to establish the reason for the absence and mark the attendance register accordingly.

Roles and Responsibilities

Parents

Parents/Carers have a legal duty to ensure that children of compulsory school age (the term after that in which they are five) attend on a regular and full-time basis.

Parents/Carers should ensure that if their child is to be absent from school for any unavoidable reasons such as sickness, they should contact the school as soon as possible, but by 9:15am, on the first morning of absence.

Parents/Carers should ensure that their child arrives at school in time for the start of registration (8.50am). If a child is late they should report directly to the school reception with their parent if

appropriate. If the parent is unaware of the lateness then they should be contacted by an appropriate member of staff. Lateness is monitored and may be recorded as unauthorised.

As a school, we are keen to ensure that we promote the highest attendance possible for all our young people as this is a fundamental life skill that will ensure young people's future success. Not only is it vital that our young people establish the very best habits and routines to ensure their success.

If absence – its pattern or frequency – gives cause for concern, standard letters can be sent home (Appendix 2). This provides the opportunity for discussing any problems with the tutor. Letters are not sent out automatically so that personal circumstances can be clarified.

Every effort is made to bring about improvement regarding poor attendance and appropriate agencies will be referred to where support is identified as a need.

The standard letters should be used for poor attendance. The same applies to punctuality. (Letters are part of the Appendix). Local knowledge and judgement should be used before sending letters.

Telephone messages and emails are acceptable ways of communicating absence at school. Should this not be possible, then it is appropriate for a parent to write the reason for absence inb the pupil's planner.

Tutors:

Tutors will record attendances using the School Information Management System (SIMS) accurately and punctually as they are responsible for this legal document. They should refer to guidance when placing a code for a pupil's absence (Appendix 1). Absence notes will be kept by the tutor for the academic year for which they are valid.

Registers are called twice a day at 8.50am and 1.25pm. If a child is absent and a message has been received from home by email or telephone, the office staff will enter the appropriate code in the register. If no explanation has been received by 9:45am from the child's Parents/Carers then, on safeguarding grounds, the school will endeavour to make contact with the parent/carer after which an appropriate judgement regarding authorisation will be made.

It is the responsibility of the tutor to follow up any initial concerns regarding pupils in their tutor group and then if unresolved to pass those concerns over to the respective College Leader. If further assistance is required then the matter is to be referred to the delegated member of the teaching staff.

The attendance of the whole school is monitored by a delegated member of staff. Action is instigated in response to the data. Liaison with outside agencies, including the 'Education Investigation Service' and 'Children's' Social Care' will occur when necessary.

New guidelines state that it is the individual school's responsibility to deal with initial attendance issues but that the 'Education Investigation Service' will continue to investigate cases of irregular school attendance by undertaking targeted interventions and, where appropriate, instigate legal action under the Education Act 1996 for unauthorised absence.

Lates

Registration will close at 9.30am and 1.45pm. Beyond these times, the pupils will be marked absent until their arrival when they will be marked late 'L'. For morning registration pupils arriving between 8.50 and 9.30 am will be marked as late 'L'. Arriving after 9.30 am marked as 'U'.

The computerised attendance register will record a message detailing any information pertaining to the reason for late arrival.

Persistent late arrival will be monitored and discussed with parents.

Holidays

Amendments to 'attendance regulations' came into force on 1st September 2013. The amendments make it clear that headteachers/principals may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. In such exceptional circumstances, headteachers/principals determine the number of school days a student can be away from school if the leave is granted. Family holidays do not qualify as exceptional circumstances. The school term dates are published a year in advance and are made available on the school website in the expectation that parents/carers will ensure that holidays are taken during school holiday times.

Any **request** for absence must be made in writing to the Principal. If our school does not authorise a leave of absence for the purpose of a holiday but the parents still take the child out of school, or the child is kept away for longer than was agreed, the absence is unauthorised.

Re-integration Strategies

Children who have had a long period of absence through illness may find re integration difficult. This can be assisted by:

- the Tutor, Pastoral Manager and/or College Leader maintaining contact by letter and visits. This can be positive and supportive;
- part time attendance for a stated time;
- attaching a friend as a mentor support on return.
- additional support as deemed appropriate and practicable.

Children at Risk of Missing Education

Schools must have regard to the statutory guidance 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' when making arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. This responsibility is taken very seriously at our school.

Schools should put in place appropriate safeguarding responses for children who go missing from school, particularly on repeat occasions. Where reasonably practicable, for every pupil, we shall endeavour to hold an emergency contact number for more than one person. Emergency contact numbers should be provided and updated by the parent with whom the pupil normally resides. This goes beyond the legal requirement but is good practice. Doing so provides schools with additional options for making contact with a responsible adult when a child is missing school and is also identified as a welfare and/or safeguarding concern.

Where school staff have concerns about a child, they should use their professional judgement and knowledge of the individual pupil to inform their decision as to whether welfare concerns should be escalated

Definitions

Authorised Absence

An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate, acceptable reason and the school, has received an appropriate notification from the parent/carer. For example, should a child be unwell and the parent/carer writes a note of explanation and/or telephones the school to explain the reason for absence.

Only the Headteacher or a properly designated member of staff may authorise any absence. Parents do not have the authority to do so. Consequently, not all absence supported by parents will be classified as authorised.

Unauthorised Absence

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of both the school and the parent/carer or if the child is away from school without good reason even with the support of a parent/carer (eg shopping or a birthday).

Holidays taken within the school term (except in exceptional circumstances agreed by the Head teacher) will be deemed as unauthorised absence. The expectation is that term time holidays should not be planned or booked.

Persistent Absence

This is defined as being less than 90% attendance at school. Pupils who fall below this level will be closely monitored, and actions listed above to promote a higher level of attendance will be enacted.

Appendix 1
Attendance Codes

Code	Description
/ \	Present at registration
B	Educated off-site (not dual registration)
C	Other authorised circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)
D	Dual registered (i.e. present at another school or at a PRU)
E	Excluded but no alternative provision made
F	Agreed extended family holiday
G	Family holiday (not agreed or sessions in excess of agreement) =unauthorised
H	Agreed family holiday
I	Illness (not medical/dental appointment)
J	Interview
L	Late but arrived before the register closed
M	Medical or dental appointment
N	No reason for the absence provided yet =unauthorised
O	Other unauthorised (not covered by other codes or descriptions)
P	Approved sporting activity
R	Day set aside exclusively for religious observance
S	Study leave
T	Traveller absence
U	Late and arrived after the register closed =unauthorised
V	Educational visit or trip
W	Work experience (not work based training)
X	Untimetabled sessions for non-compulsory school-age pupils
Y	Partial and forced closure
Z	Pupil not on roll yet
#	School closed to all pupils

Appendix 2

Attendance Response Flow Chart

Pupil's attendance is identified as a concern

Phase 1 response:

- Supportive conversations with pupil and College Leader recorded on Phase 1 proforma
- Letter of concern sent home.
- EduKey log opened

Attendance reviewed at next check point by DSLs

Attendance has improved	or	Attendance is still a concern
No further action EduKey Log closed		Move to Phase 2 response.

Phase 2 response:

- Telephone call from DSL to parent
- Conversation recorded on Phase 2 proforma
- 2nd Letter of concern sent home

Attendance reviewed at next check point by DSLs

Attendance has improved	or	Attendance is still a concern
No further action EduKey Log closed		Move to Phase 3 response.

Phase 3 response:

- Formal meeting arranged by DSL and parent
- Meeting recorded on Phase 3 proforma
- Final concern letter sent home

Attendance reviewed at next check point by DSLs

Attendance has improved	or	Attendance is still a concern
No further action Edukey log closed		Move to Phase 4 response.

Phase 4 response:

- Local Authority referral letter sent home

If attendance becomes a concern again within the same academic year, next phase will be actioned upon.

Appendix 3
Phase 1 attendance response

College Leader Supportive Meeting with Pupil

Pupil name:		Date of birth:	
College:		Tutor Group:	
Current attendance:		Date of contact:	

What is working well? *Looking at the attendance breakdown- when is attendance or punctuality good?*	
What are we worried about? *Looking at the attendance breakdown- when is attendance or punctuality good?*	
What needs to happen to improve attendance? *Include target timescales.*	

Staff member:	

➲ *Please copy to the tutor and to the safeguarding team for upload to Edukey.*

Appendix 4
Phase 1 letter

Regarding less than 90% attendance

Dear [Parent/Carer]

The school reviews attendance regularly.

We have noticed that [pupil name]'s attendance has fallen below 90%. This is considered to be 'persistent absence' by the Department for Education, and thus a cause for concern.

Please find a copy of our supportive conversation and [pupil name]'s attendance record enclosed.

We hope to see an improvement of [pupil name]'s attendance in order to be able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered.

Yours sincerely

Staff name
College Leader

Appendix 5
Phase 2 attendance response

Safeguarding team telephone call

Pupil name:		**Date of birth:**	
College:		**Tutor Group:**	
Current attendance:		**Date of contact:**	
Reason for follow-up:			
What is working well? *Looking at the attendance breakdown- when is attendance or punctuality good?*			
What are we worried about? *Looking at the attendance breakdown- when is attendance or punctuality good?*			
What needs to happen to improve attendance? *Include target timescales.*			
Staff member:			

➲ *These forms to be shared with the College Leader, tutor, and uploaded onto Edukey.*

Appendix 6
Phase 2 letter

Regarding less than 90% attendance

Dear [Parent/Carer]

The school reviews attendance regularly.

We have contacted you previously due to [pupil name]'s attendance falling below 90%, unfortunately there has been no improvement. [pupil name]'s current attendance is ……%.

Please find enclosed a summary of the telephone call you received from …… (Alternate / Designated Safeguarding Lead) and a copy of your child's current attendance.

If there is no improvement of [pupil name]'s attendance, we shall invite you into school for a meeting with one of our Designated Safeguarding Leads to discuss ways we can work together to improve your child's attendance.

We want [pupil name] to take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered here and we feel that this cannot be achieved with attendance at its present rate.

Yours sincerely

Staff name
Alternate / Designated Safeguarding Lead

Appendix 7
Phase 3 attendance response

Safeguarding team formal meeting

Pupil name:		**Date of birth:**	
College:		**Tutor Group:**	
Parent / carer attending:		**Date of meeting:**	
Reason for follow-up phone call:		**Current attendance:**	
What is working well? *Looking at the attendance breakdown- when is attendance or punctuality good?* *What actions from previous contact have been effective?*			
What are we worried about? *Looking at the attendance breakdown- when is attendance or punctuality good?* *What actions from previous contact have not been effective?*			
What needs to happen to improve attendance? *Include target timescales.*			
Formal warning letter presented:	*Accepted / Refused*	Date copy emailed:	
Staff member:			

➲ *These forms to be shared with the College Leader, tutor, and uploaded onto Edukey.*

Appendix 8
Phase 3 letter

Final attendance concern letter

Dear [Parent/Carer]

The school has previously contacted you about [pupil]'s attendance. Unfortunately, no noticeable improvement has been shown.

A summary of our meeting today and your child's attendance record is enclosed. As outlined in the previous letter, educational progress is being affected by absence.
Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 states:
"If a child of compulsory school age, who is a registered pupil at a school, fails to attend regularly at the school, his (her) parent is guilty of an offence."

We have to give notice, therefore, if no improvement is shown very within the next two weeks and sustained for at least the next term, we shall refer the situation to the Education Investigation Service, who may visit to discuss the situation with you.

Yours sincerely

Staff name
Alternate / Designated Safeguarding Lead