



Chiltern Way Academy

Turning Futures Around

Attendance for Learning Policy

Responsibility for this policy (job title): SWAM

Governors' Committee with responsibility for its review: Curriculum

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Introduction:

Regular school attendance is essential if children are to achieve their full potential.

Chiltern Way Academy believe that regular school attendance is the key to enabling children to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and become emotionally resilient, confident and competent adults who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community.

Chiltern Way Academy values all students. As set out in this policy, we will work with families to identify the reasons for poor attendance and try to resolve any difficulties.

Attendance legislation.

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that parents / carers must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive efficient full time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs the child may have. This can be regular attendance at school or by education otherwise.

If a child of compulsory school age is registered at a school and fails to attend regularly at the school, then the parent / carer is guilty of an offence under Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996.

“Schools have a responsibility to engage pupils in learning and to promote attendance”

DFES Publication – Tackling it Together

Regular attendance at school is a prerequisite for appropriate student achievement. Absence whether it is long term, frequent or occasional leads to missed experiences and may cause fractured social relationships which encourage an increased pattern of non-attendance.

As an educationally inclusive school we constantly monitor and evaluate the progress each of our students makes. The school seeks to identify any students who may be missing out due to attendance or punctuality problems.

The school staff are keen to work in partnership with students, parents/carers and outside agencies to support all families and ensure students can make progress with their education and life beyond school.

Aims:

- To emphasise the importance of and secure from students, maximum attendance at school to enable them to take full advantage of their educational opportunities.
- To make explicit to all relevant parties the school’s expectations over attendance levels.
- To promote a consistent approach across the school to all matters relating to attendance.
- To clarify roles and responsibilities of all parties in respect to attendance.
- To communicate to all relevant parties (teachers, parents/carers, students) the legal position with respect to attendance and the categories of absence which are deemed ‘authorised’.
- To stress the need for home and school to work in close partnership to achieve high attendance.

Regular attendance at school is vital. Without it the learning process becomes fragmented and unsatisfactory; put simply; **absence means missed learning**. It is also a legal requirement that students of

a compulsory school age receive full time education and this, with the exception of those educated at home or elsewhere, means regular attendance at school.

Irregular attendance leads to students missing important lessons and therefore not fulfilling their true potential; it also places children at risk and may result in their being drawn into patterns of anti-social or criminal behaviour. Therefore we take the issues of attendance very seriously and do all we can to obtain very high attendance from all our students.

Attendance is a National priority and it is a key indicator of an effective school and, as such, is scrutinised by Ofsted. We submit data to the Local Authority (LA) every term and to the Department of Education (DfE) three times a year through the CENSUS.

National data clearly shows a positive correlation between high attendance and high examination performance.

What is an acceptable attendance rate?

The vast majority of our students achieve over 95% attendance and this is what we expect from all our students as a minimum.

Sickness comes usually as a block of time over a continuous period; what we look for are unbroken weeks (i.e. those where the student is marked present on all ten sessions); students should NOT have more than one or two broken weeks in the course of an academic year. Regular broken weeks are a cause for concern and will be followed up by the school.

Authorised Absences:

The DfE has issued guidelines to all schools detailing valid reasons for authorised or justified absences:

- When a child is ill or receiving medical attention
- Days of religious observance notified in advance
- Absence due to family circumstances (e.g. bereavement, serious illness).

There are other absences, such as 'Approved sporting activity' that can be authorised and there will be events affecting families, some unforeseen, which will necessitate absence from school and professional discretion will need to be used in these cases about whether the absence can be authorised.

We expect absence to be kept to a minimum; routine medical and dental appointments should be arranged outside of school hours wherever possible.

Authorising absence is ultimately a decision made by the Head Teacher.

Religious Observance:

The Chiltern Way Academy acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods or weekends and this necessitates a consideration of authorised absence or special leave for religious observance. (Code R)

It is reasonable for a parent/carer to allow their children not to attend school on any day of religious observance if recognised by the parent's / carer's religious body.

Parents / carers are requested to give advance notice to the school if they intend their child to be absent.

However, in the interests of fulfilling the academic requirements of the school and limiting the authorised absence rate of the school, it is identified as reasonable that no more than one day be designated for any individual occasion of religious observance/festival and no more than three days in total in any academic year.

Any further absence will be categorised as unauthorised.

Unauthorised Absences:

- No letter or acceptable explanation is provided by parents/carers;
- The reason for absence does not fall into one of the categories of authorised absence above.

The DfE guidelines state that the following activities would be classified as unauthorised:

- Minding the house
- Caring for relatives
- Awaiting repair people
- Shopping
- A birthday or family celebration

We ask parents /carers to notify the school in advance of any proposed special occasion to ascertain whether the school would view the reason for absence as valid or not. Individual cases will need to be judged on their merits.

The DfE guidelines make it plain that, in the final analysis, it is the school that judges whether an absence is authorised or not. **A note from home therefore does NOT automatically make an absence valid/justified/authorised.**

Leave of Absence.

DfE guidelines were revised in 2006 when research showed clear evidence between attendance levels and progress. **Schools are now no longer able to automatically authorise any absence during term time for holidays.**

We strongly discourage holidays being taken in term time as learning is disrupted and lost time is detrimental to the educational progress of the child. The DfE guidance makes it clear that each case will be considered on its merits and approval is NOT automatic.

Parents/ carers who feel it is absolutely unavoidable to take their annual holiday during term time, must write into the Head of Campus requesting a leave of absence clearly explaining the circumstances at least four weeks in advance – prior to any booking. In addition to this a meeting must be arranged with the Head teacher or senior teacher with responsibility for attendance to discuss the situation.

As a school we will only authorise leave of absence in extenuating circumstances.

The school will not authorise holidays retrospectively.

Home / School Partnership

Securing a high level of attendance requires the school and home to work closely together. In order to achieve this it is essential that parents/carers:

- Ensure their child arrives at school **on time** for morning and afternoon registration (parents / carers can be prosecuted if their child is persistently late). Morning registration begins at 9.00am and afternoon lessons begin at 2.15pm, 1.15pm on a Friday. We will monitor persistent late comers and action will be taken.
- If their child is ill, to notify the school on the first day using our 24 hour answer machine service including an estimation of the likely length of absence (01296 622157 for Wendover or 01494 863514 for Prestwood)
- Send in a written note with their child on the first day of return. This is needed for our records and also authenticates the telephone message.
- Contact the school at an early stage about any concerns they have about their child's attitude and attendance to school.

In return the school will:

- Contact home on the first day of all absence if no message has been received from home using our automated response system.
- Contact home over any absences about which we are doubtful.
- Follow up promptly any concerns that parents / carers pass on to us that may be affecting their child's attitude to, or feeling of wellbeing in school.
- Involve the School Support Services to help reintegrate into school after illness or other individual circumstances.
- Regularly and consistently remind students of the importance of good attendance and punctuality.
- Reward good and improving attendance and action any concerns promptly.
- Our expectations are outlined in our booklet "School Attendance". This is posted home in September of each academic year.

Support Systems within School

Chiltern Way Academy recognise that poor attendance is often an indication of difficulties in a child's life. This may be related to problems at home and or in school. Parents / carers should make school aware of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and/or behaviour in school, for example, bereavement, divorce / separation. This will help the school identify any additional support that may be required.

Chiltern Way Academy also recognise that some students are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance, for example, those students with special educational needs, those with physical or mental health needs, migrant and refugee students and looked after children.

The school will implement a range of strategies to support improved attendance. Strategies used will include:

- Discussion with parents / carers and students
- Referrals to support agencies
- Reward systems
- Time limited part time time-tables
- Additional learning support
- Behaviour support
- Inclusion units
- Reintegration support packages

Support offered to families will be child centred and planned in discussion and agreement with both parents / carers and students.

If any parent / carer or student is experiencing difficulties with achieving regular attendance please do not hesitate to contact the school Safeguarding, Welfare and Attendance Manager/EWO who monitors attendance on a daily basis and works with students and families to improve attendance.

Legal Sanctions

Where school based intervention fails to bring about an improvement in attendance, Chiltern Way Academy will notify the Buckinghamshire Education Welfare Service of the irregular attendance.

The school may invite parents / carers to attend a Parenting Contract Meeting and issue a formal warning of a Penalty Notice.

Parenting Contracts (Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003) A Parenting contract is a voluntary agreement between the school and the parent / carer, it can also be extended to include the child and any other agencies offering support to resolve any difficulties leading to improved attendance.

The contract will outline attendance targets and will detail agreed actions that will help to achieve the target. The contract will be reviewed regularly.

The contract can be used as evidence in a prosecution should irregular attendance continue.

Penalty Notices (Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003) Penalty Notices will be considered when:

- Intervention has failed to bring about improvement and further unauthorised absence has occurred following written warning to improve.
- A student has taken leave of absence i.e. for the purpose of a holiday in term time and the absence has not been authorised by the school

A Penalty Notice may be used as an alternative to prosecution in cases of unauthorised absence from school. A £60 fine, per parent/carer, per child must be paid within 21 days. The fine increases to £120 per parent/carer, per child if paid after 21 days but within 28 days of the date the Notice was issued.

Failure to pay the Penalty Notice may result in a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

Prosecution:

The school will provide the Local Authority with evidence required for a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996. This is to ensure that parents / carers realise their own responsibilities in ensuring attendance at school and most importantly about returning children to education.

Rewards for good attendance.

To promote good attendance and to emphasise its importance the school offers the following rewards:

Daily:

- Points can only be achieved if at school.

Weekly:

- 100% attendees have the opportunity to win a £5 voucher in assembly.

Termly:

- Regular celebration assemblies.
- 100% attendees each half-term will go on a reward trip.

Attendance and absence will also be included in reports home on a regular basis.

Roles and Responsibilities:

High attendance levels are achieved as a result of staff working closely together and knowing where their responsibilities lie. The diagram in the 'Registers and Associated Attendance Procedures' document tries to make it plain the respective roles of form tutors, administrative support and Senior leaders in the school. It is important that all members of staff are aware of their responsibilities.