

THE VINE INTER-CHURCH PRIMARY SCHOOL

The Vine Inter-Church Primary School is committed to the prevention of discrimination and the promotion of equality of opportunity for all and is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and expects all staff and volunteers to share these commitments.



PROMOTING ATTENDANCE POLICY

'Central to raising standards in education and ensuring all pupils can fulfill 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: Statutory guidance and departmental advice, DFE Aug 2013

Policy development: SPRING 2024

Policy ratification: SPRING 2024

Policy review: SPRING 2027

Impact on Christian Values

The value of patience is important in this policy as well as setting high expectations of ourselves and others.

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1) STATEMENT OF INTENT

The Vine Inter-Church Primary School expects the highest attendance and punctuality from all pupils, at all times. We support pupils and their families to ensure that excellent attendance is achieved. Pupils are expected to attend school for 190 days each year. One day counts as a morning and an afternoon session, a total of 380 sessions per year.

The national expectation for school attendance is 100%.

2) AIMS

- To ensure that the right to education is protected for every child.
- To raise standards and ensure every child reaches their full educational potential, through a high level of school attendance and punctuality.
- To ensure all the stakeholders, governors, parents/carers, pupils and staff receive regular communication about the importance of good attendance and punctuality.
- To keep accurate, up-to-date records and have a robust and rigorous system for analysing attendance.
- To identify causes of low attendance/punctuality with individuals, classes and groups of pupils and address them.
- To work with external agencies in promoting attendance

3) ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Parent/Carers Responsibility

- a) A child becomes of compulsory school age the term after their fifth birthday. Parents/carers have a legal duty to ensure that pupils of compulsory school age attend on a regular and full-time basis to make the most of the educational opportunities available. In FS2 (foundation stage), pupils usually start full-time after a short period of part-time to introduce them to school. For a small number of children an extended part-time period may be beneficial, this decision is made in partnership between home and school. For FS1 (pre-school) the expectation is for the pupils to arrive on time on their allocated morning or afternoon session.
- b) Parents/carers are responsible for ensuring that their child attends school punctually and regularly.
- c) Parents/carers should make contact to the school by 9:10am, every morning of pupil absence.
- d) Parents/carers are requested to inform the school, in advance, of any circumstances which might affect the child's attendance, for example medical appointments. Medical and dental appointments should not be arranged in school time if possible. Evidence of medical appointments is required.
- e) Parents/carers may not authorise their child's absence - only the school can do this on the basis of the explanation provided by the parents/carers. Should parents/carers fail to provide a satisfactory reason for their child's absence the school will record such absence as unauthorised.
- f) Parents/carers work in partnership with the school and other agencies in the best interests of their child; this includes informing the school about significant influences and changes in the child's life, which may impact on their learning.

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School Responsibilities

- a) The school records and monitors attendance in accordance with the statutory requirements.
- b) Morning registration opens at 8:40 am and closes at 8:50am. Afternoon registration opens at 1pm and closes at 1.10pm. Pre-school afternoon registers will be taken between 11:30-11:40am.
- c) Teachers should complete registers in accordance with current guidance. The attendance officer inspects registers to ensure that these are being satisfactorily maintained and to ensure that any potential attendance difficulties are identified at an early stage.
- d) Should a class teacher have concerns about an individual child's attendance or punctuality, they will log this on the My Concern, the safeguarding system.
- e) Should a child be absent the attendance officer will enter the appropriate code in the register. Should no explanation be received from the child's parent/carer, the school office will endeavour to contact the parent/carer under the first response system from 9.10am onwards. Individual causes of concern may trigger more rapid procedures to be implemented. Home visits may be carried out by the school if there are concerns or if there has been no contact from parent/carers regarding a child's absence.
- f) The attendance officer regularly reviews attendance data and shares this with the leadership team. Pupils with attendance below 95% are identified and reasons for absence are discussed; pupils with attendance below 90% are classed as a persistent absentee.
- g) The attendance officer produces weekly/termly/yearly data for analysis by the leadership team and governors.
- h) The attendance officer issues standard letters to parents/carers following the Cambridgeshire County Council policy 'Managing Attendance, Three Letter System (including the use of Penalty Notice) to alert parents to the fact that there may be a problem with attendance. (Appendix 2)
- i) On the first day that a pupil misses school without explanation or authorisation, a member of staff will contact the pupil's parents or carers to make sure they are safe at home. The school may require a video call to see a pupil, to ensure their safety. If the senior leaders are concerned about the safety of a pupil, then they will contact the police or social care.

The Governing Body

The Governing Body is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on a termly basis. It also holds the headteacher to account for the implementation of the policy.

The Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- The implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

The Attendance Officer

The school attendance officer:

- Monitors attendance data across the school and at an individual pupil level
- Reports concerns about attendance to the headteacher
- Works with the Local authority Attendance Improvement Officer to tackle persistent absence
- Arranges meeting with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Advises the headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices

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Class teachers

Class teachers are responsible for taking the register on a daily basis. The attendance officer is responsible for marking an absence with the correct code.

4) RECORDING ATTENDANCE

Punctuality

The school gates open at 8.25 am. and pupils may enter their classrooms at 8:30am. Learning begins promptly at 8:40 am when the playground gate is locked. If a child arrives after 8:40 am the parent/carer should report directly to the school office where they will need to sign the child in and give a reason for the lateness. School cannot accept a reason for lateness from a pupil. After 9.10am, unless a satisfactory explanation has been provided by a parent/carer as to why their child is late, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised for the morning session. Punctuality is regularly monitored by the attendance officer.

End of the school day

School finishes at 3pm. If a child is not collected at the end of the school day and the school has not been able to contact parent/carers or other emergency contacts after 1 hour, the Cambridgeshire document 'Joint protocol between education and social care for dealing with children not collected from school at the end of the school day/activity' will be referred to. This may result in the school contacting Children's Social Care.

Absence

a) Definitions of absence

Authorised absence – an absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a valid reason and the school has received a reason from a parent/carer. An example of this can be when a child is ill or has a medical appointment; a day of religious observance (notified in advance) or close family funeral. Only the school can make an absence authorised and it should be noted that not all absences will be authorised.

Unauthorised absence – an absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the authorisation of the Headteacher or when no valid reason has been provided. Examples of unauthorised leave are taking unauthorised term-time leave, birthday celebrations and unexplained absences.

b) Sickness Absence

Parents/carers should ensure that if their child is to be absent from school for any unanticipated reason such as sickness, they should contact the school by 9:10am on every morning of absence. This may be done by phone, email, Scholarpack App or in person. If no valid explanation is given for a pupil's absence, then the absence will be marked as unauthorised. If a pupil's attendance falls below 90%, for any future absences due to illness, parents/carers will be asked to provide medical evidence to support this e.g, a GP appointment card.

Every effort should be made to arrange dental/medical appointments out of school hours. If this is not possible, evidence of a medical appointment should be shown to the school office staff and pupils should be returned to school as soon as possible after the appointment.

c) Special Leave of Absence

Parents/carers may request permission for their child to be absent from school for events such as visiting a new school, attending a musical examination or as an opportunity for gifted and talented pupils to further develop their skills. Government guidance makes it clear that only truly exceptional circumstances should be classified as authorised. Parents do not have any right or entitlement to take their child out of school for a term-time leave.

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APPLICATIONS FOR SPECIAL LEAVE OF ABSENCE

- a) An application form to request special leave of absence is available from the school office or the school website. Any requests for special leave of absence will be considered by the school individually. Any evidence to support the request should be provided. Any unauthorised leave of absence could result in a Penalty Notice fine being issued.
- b) Requests for periods of leave which coincide with SATs (Years 2 to 6 inclusive) or Y1 phonics will **not** be granted. Request for leave must be made **10** days in advance.
- c) If permission for leave of absence is not granted and the child is absent from school, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. **Any parent who takes a child out of school for term time leave for 10 consecutive sessions (5 days) may be subject to a Penalty notice. The fine for a penalty notice will be £80 per child per parent/carer increasing to £160 if not paid after 21 days but within 28 days for pupils who are of statutory school age.**
- d) If a second penalty notice is issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil, the parent must pay **£160** if paid within 28 days.
- e) For the third offence in a three-year rolling period, the referral will be automatically considered for prosecution in relation to Section 444 Education Act 1996.
- f) Should a child be absent for term time leave for an extended period during term time (20 school days or more) not authorised by the school, a referral will be considered for prosecution (rather than a penalty notice) in relation to Section 444 Education Act 1996.

5) STRATEGIES FOR PROMOTING/REWARDING EXCELLENT ATTENDANCE:

Weekly Celebration

- o The class/classes and year group with the highest attendance is announced in the weekly newsletter, The Grapevine. Pupils with 100% attendance are celebrated in Worship at the end of a full term.

School Newsletter

- o The school newsletter is used to highlight the importance of good attendance and punctuality. It celebrates the class/classes with the highest attendance and reminds parents/carers of how percentage absence translates in terms of number of days absent.

Breakfast Club

- o Breakfast Club runs daily and can be used to encourage a calm, settled start to the school day.

End of Year Attendance Rewards

- o At the end of the school year pupils who have achieved 100% attendance or have been in school every day are celebrated. These pupils will receive a certificate and a gift from the Headteacher.

Sharing attendance data

- o Pupils are informed on a weekly basis of attendance and punctuality achievements. Parents/carers of pupils whose attendance is causing concern receive notification termly or at the mid-year point, in February. Parents/carers are also given attendance data as part of the termly consultations with teachers. Any issues are discussed, and actions are agreed as appropriate.

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Attendance Meetings

- The attendance officer and members of the leadership team monitor individuals, classes, year groups, different ethnic groups, SEN and FSM/PP pupils. These meetings are held termly to discuss patterns and trends in absence/punctuality, including persistent absence and to agree actions.

Re-integration

- Pupils who have been absent for any extended period of time are re-integrated into school through a structured and individually tailored programme. This may include a part-time timetable.

6) MONITORING AND REVIEW

The Headteacher reports attendance data via the Headteachers Report which is presented to the governors at each governor committee meeting.

The Attendance policy will be reviewed by the Headteacher every 3 years or earlier if there are changes in legislation.

Abbreviation list

- FSM - Free school meals
- AIO - Attendance Improvement Officer (Local authority)
- PP - Pupil Premium
- SEN - Special Educational Needs

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APPENDIX 1 – LOCAL AUTHORITY GUIDANCE FOR PARENTS/CARERS

All children and young people are entitled to the highest quality education which enables them to achieve their best. Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their child receives an education suitable to his/her age, ability and aptitude and any special needs. Most parents fulfil this obligation by registering their child in a school. Some parents choose to educate their children at home: this is called Elective Home Education.

Should you fail to register your child at a school and not make suitable alternative education arrangements, the County Council may issue a School Attendance Order requiring you to register your child at a named school.

Local authority Attendance Improvement Officers carry out the duty of the Authority to ensure that all children receive an education by regular school attendance. This is carried out by offering consultation meetings and audits to schools and carrying out investigations to enforce legal actions where appropriate.

Non-attendance at school

Failure to ensure a child's regular attendance at school is a criminal offence. The school will try to work with you and your child to improve school attendance. A formal parenting contract meeting will be held. The purpose of this will be to look at issues preventing regular school attendance and put together an action plan to make improvements. If with support from the school your child's attendance fails to improve, the case will be referred to Local Authority who will consider one of two courses of action:

1. Penalty Notice

As an alternative to prosecution, parents may be subject to a Penalty fine of £160 (reducing to £80 if paid within 21 days). Failing to pay the fine within 28 days will result in prosecution and if convicted you will gain a criminal record.

2. Prosecution in the Magistrate Court

The prosecution process:

Investigation

Having received an appropriate referral from the school, the Attendance Improvement Officer will carry out an investigation and gather evidence to establish if an offence has been committed under the Education Act 1996.

The PACE Interview

Should your child's attendance fail to improve, in spite of help from the school and any other professionals involved as appropriate, you may be invited to attend a PACE interview (Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984) or may proceed straight to Penalty Notice fine or prosecution. Before the meeting begins, you will be formally cautioned under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE). You will be asked a set of questions under formal caution. The aim of this interview will be to establish if an offence has been committed under the Education Act 1996. If you wish, you may have a legal representative at this meeting.

Court

Should the County Council decide to take Legal action against you, you will be served with a summons to appear before a Magistrates Court. You will receive a copy of the statement of the Attendance Improvement Officer and possibly a member of school staff and any support documents. Should you fail to

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attend, the court may consider issuing a warrant for your absent or decide to hear the case in your absence. The Case will be heard by the Magistrates. A Court Usher will be available to help you with the process. The Court Legal Advisor will read the charge. You will be asked to plead guilty or not guilty. Should you plead not guilty, the case be adjourned to a future date for a trial. Should you plead guilty, the case will be heard immediately. If the case progress to a trial, the Court will first hear the evidence from the Prosecution. You or your legal representative will then be able to address the Magistrates and explain any reasons why your child has not attended school regularly. Magistrates cannot take a view of whether an absence should have been authorised, only a headteacher as that discretion. The Magistrates will then decide how they intend to deal with the case.

Possible outcomes:

Should you have pleaded guilty or be found guilty, the sentencing/disposal options available to the Magistrates are:

- A fine of up to £2,500 each parent
- A condition discharge – You will be given a set amount of time in which to improve your child's attendance. Should you fail the County Council may bring further prosecution against you and, if both found guilty you will be sentenced for both sentences.
- An absolute discharge – The case is proved but you will not be subject to a penalty, although you will receive a criminal conviction
- Deferred sentence – A new Court date will be arranged, during which time you will be expected to have taken steps to improve your child's school attendance. Sentence will be passed at this new hearing.
- Imprisonment – Only for the more serious (aggravated) offence and repeat offenders. It can be for up to 3 months.
- Parenting order – The Magistrates may order you to attend parenting classes.

Education supervision order

The court may also direct that the County Council consider making an application for an Education Supervision Order (ESO). The Local Authority may also decide on this option as an alternative to prosecution.

What happens next?

Regardless of the outcome in Court, you will continue to receive support from the school to ensure that your child attends regularly.

Should your child return to school and attend regularly, no further legal action will be taken against you.

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APPENDIX 2 – Summary of the Cambridgeshire 3 letter system to parents

