



# The Ark Federation, part of St. Christopher's Multi Academy Trust

## Attendance Policy

This policy was adopted by the Local Governing Body at their meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2018

Signed.....

Mrs Jean Smith, Chair of LGB of The Ark Federation, part of St. Christopher's MAT

Signed.....

Ms Rebecca Porter Executive Head

### 1. Aim

The aim of this attendance policy is to provide consistent practice that encourages and facilitates the regular attendance of all pupils across the Federation of schools. Regular attendance at school is key to steady pupil progress and enjoyment of learning, and for this reason each school is dedicated to ensuring its attendance policy is adhered to as much as is possible.

The Federation takes a whole-school approach to maintaining excellent attendance and it is the joint responsibility of parents, pupils, and all staff members to ensure that children are attending school as they should be. We endeavour to work with families to make sure that any problems or circumstances which may lead or be leading to poor attendance are given the right attention and appropriate support.

This policy is supported by our policies on **safeguarding, bullying, behaviour**. It should be read in conjunction with Statutory Guidance on School Behaviour and Attendance: parental responsibility measures, January 2017.

## 2. Legal framework

**The *Education Act 1996* states that:**

**The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable —**

- (a) to his age, ability and aptitude, and
- (b) to any special educational needs he may have,

either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

**A person begins to be of compulsory school age —**

- (a) when he attains the age of five, if he attains that age on a prescribed day, and
- (b) otherwise at the beginning of the prescribed day next following his attaining that age.

*[Normally referred to as the start of the term following their 5<sup>th</sup> birthday]*

**A person ceases to be of compulsory school age** at the end of the day which is the school leaving date for any calendar year —

- (a) if he attains the age of 16 after that day but before the beginning of the school year next following,
- (b) if he attains that age on that day, or
- (c) (unless paragraph (a) applies) if that day is the school leaving date next following his attaining that age.

*[Normally referred to as the last Friday in June in the school year in which they obtain the age of 16 years]*

The Federation is dedicated to complying with attendance laws set out by the legal framework and has set out this attendance policy accordingly.

## 3. Roles and responsibilities

### Governing body

As part of each whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, the governing body will:

- ensure that the importance of attendance is made clear by promoting the relevant school policies and guidance directed at parents and staff;

- annually review the school's attendance policy and ensure that all provisions are in place to allow school staff, parents, and children to implement the policy effectively;
- **Mrs Lesley Brown** will take the lead role in monitoring attendance and coordinating provision and policies for attendance;
- ensure that all legislation regarding attendance is complied with and that up-to-date guidelines are communicated to parents, children, and staff;
- work out appropriate and accurate annual attendance numbers and future attendance targets, and submit these to the LA within an agreed timescale each year;
- take time at governor's meetings to review and discuss attendance issues that have arisen in order to stay on top of expected attendance targets for the year;
- ensure that the school is implementing effective means of recording attendance and organising that data, including for children who are educated off-site;
- ensure that they are clear on how to analyse attendance data, including for vulnerable groups, and how to communicate the findings effectively to parents and staff;
- use any data gathered to devise solutions to problems, make the proper adjustments to attendance coordination and target set for the future;
- ensure that data is used within the school to measure the impact of strategies used to improve attendance.

### **School leadership team**

As part of our whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, the school leadership team will:

- be active in their approach to promoting good attendance to pupils and their parents, which includes forming positive relationships with families;
- ensure that the school's teaching and learning experiences encourage regular attendance and that pupils are taught the value of high attendance for their own progression and achievement;
- coordinate with the governing body to monitor the implementation of the attendance policy and its effectiveness, with an annual full policy review;
- ensure that all staff are up to date with the school's attendance policy and government legislation, and that staff are fully trained to recognise and deal with attendance issues;

- ensure that government legislation on attendance is complied with and that they (the leadership team) are up to date with any legislation changes and how to implement them;
- nominate or appoint a senior manager to take the responsibility of overseeing and monitoring attendance provision and that this person has sufficient time and resources to give to this job;
- report to the governing body termly against any targets set;
- ensure that systems to record and report attendance data are in place and working effectively;
- develop multi-agency relationships to help with poor attendance and support families who are having difficulties getting their child to attend;
- document any specific interventions or steps taken to work with families to improve their child's attendance in case of future legal proceedings;
- ensure that the local authority is informed in a timely manner if pupils cease to attend;
- Work with the Education Welfare Officer to monitor pupils attendance and where concerns exist inform parents in writing inviting them discuss these concerns and seek ways to improve attendance.

### **Teachers and support staff**

As part of our whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, the school's teachers and support staff will:

- be active in their approach to promoting good attendance to pupils and their parents, which includes forming positive relationships with families;
- ensure that the school's teaching and learning experiences encourage regular attendance and that pupils are taught the value of high attendance for their own personal progression and achievement;
- ensure that they are fully aware and up to date with the school's attendance policy and government legislation and that they will speak to another member of staff or seek support if they are unsure how to deal with an attendance issue;
- ensure that they are following the correct systems for recording attendance and that attendance is taken daily;
- contribute to strategy meetings and interventions where they are needed;
- work with external agencies to support pupils and their families who are struggling with regular attendance.

## Parents and carers

As part of our whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, we request that parents:

- contact school regarding a pupil's absence (*this should be done by 9am on the first day of absence*);
- engage with their children's education – support their learning and take an interest in what they have been doing at school;
- promote the value of good education and the importance of regular school attendance at home;
- encourage and support their children's aspirations;
- follow the set school procedure for reporting the absence of their child from school (**see section 4**), and include an expected date for return;
- do everything they can to prevent unnecessary school absences, such as by making medical and dental appointments outside of school hours;
- use the school, including attending meetings and parent consultation evenings as requested to support when they or their child are having difficulties, and work to form a positive relationship with the school so that there is easy communication when a problem arises;
- keep the school informed of any circumstances which may affect their child's attendance;
- establish a regular routine at home in terms of homework, bedtime, etc. so that the child is used to consistency and the school day becomes part of that routine. It is vital that the child receives the same message at home as they do at school about the importance of attendance;
- do not take their children out of school for holidays during term time. If parents would like to make a special request for this, they may do so to the Headteacher (**see section 4.5**);
- sign a home-school agreement;
- ensure their child(ren) arrive at school on time for registration. Parents are held responsible for children who arrive late. Parents need to notify the office if their child has arrived late and give a reason for lateness. Any unjustifiable reason for absence will be marked as unauthorised. This will help the school to monitor attendance and keep accurate records for the child's individual attendance, and is also vital for health and safety in the event of a school evacuation;

## Pupils

As part of our whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, we request that pupils:

- be aware of the school's attendance policy and when and what they are required to attend. This will be communicated to them through the school staff, parents, and the school timetable in an age appropriate way;
- speak to their class teacher or another member of staff if they are experiencing difficulties at school or at home which may impact on their attendance;
- attend all lessons ready to learn, with the appropriate learning tools requested and on time for the class. Lesson times will be made clear through their school timetable;
- follow the correct set school procedure if they arrive late (**see section 4.7**). This will help the school to monitor attendance and keep accurate records for the child's individual attendance, and is also vital for health and safety in the event of a school evacuation;

### 4. Categories of absence and procedure for reporting absences

Absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation for the pupil's absence is given to the school. Parents cannot authorise absences. The Federation works closely with the Education Welfare Service and will seek the support and advice of the Education Welfare Officer where concerns are held about a child's attendance including punctuality.

School staff should make it clear on the school register whether a child's absence is authorised or unauthorised.

When a child is to be absent from school without prior permission, parents should inform the school by telephone on the first day of absence and let them know what date they expect the child to return. *For a prolonged absence, this should be followed up with a written note from the parent/carer of the child.* Alternative arrangements will be made individually with non-English speaking parents or carers.

#### 4.1 Illness

Most cases of absence due to illness are short term, but parents will need to make a phone call to alert the school on *the first day* of absence, explaining the reason for absence.

For prolonged absence due to illness, parents may be asked to provide the school with medical evidence such as a note from the child's doctor, an appointment card or a prescription paper.

Where the school has concerns due to excessive illness it can request in writing that all absences of any length due to medical or illness are accompanied by medical evidence that could be an appointment card, prescription or letter from a doctor/consultant.

#### **4.2 Medical or dental appointments**

Parents should make every effort to ensure these appointments are made outside of school hours. Where it cannot be avoided, children should attend school for as much of that day as possible.

#### **4.3 Authorised absences**

There may be some instances where the school will authorise absence such as for a family bereavement.

#### **4.4 Exclusion**

Exclusion is treated as an authorised absence. The Headteacher/Deputy Head will arrange for work to be sent home.

#### **4.5 Absence in exceptional circumstances**

Parents should make every effort to ensure that family holidays and extended leave are arranged outside of school term time. The Headteacher has the discretion to grant leave, but they should only do so in exceptional circumstances. If the Headteacher grants a leave request, it will be for them to determine the length of time that the child can be away from school. This leave is unlikely, however, to be granted for the purposes of a family holiday. The school asks parents to complete in advance as possible an S2 form which is available from the school (and is included as appendix 1 of this policy).

Parents can be fined for taking their child on holiday during term time without consent from the school. Requests for leave of this type must be made in writing to the Headteacher in advance of the leave being taken and by using the required S2 form adding further detail on an attached letter if required. In the case of unforeseen circumstances, such as a family bereavement that requires the child to travel to another country, this will be taken into consideration.

Retrospective applications will not be considered and this time taken will be processed as unauthorised absence. All requests for absence will be responded to in writing using the S2 form and will outline the details of when the child is expected to return to school. Parents should contact the school immediately if there will be a cause for delay from the stated date of return.

When deciding whether to authorise absence, the Headteacher will consider if there are exceptional circumstances and if so, may then also take the following into account:

- The child's previous attendance history.
- How close the time is to tests/standardised assessment tests (SATs).
- The purpose of the leave.

If permission is not granted, but the child is still absent, the absence is classed as unauthorised and parents may be issued with a penalty notice.

#### **4.6 Religious observance**

The Federation recognises that there may be times where children of different faiths observe religious festivals that fall outside of school holidays and weekends, and will allow authorised absence for these times.

Parents will be aware of these dates and should give the school written notification in advance.

#### **4.7 Late arrival**

**Registration begins at 9.00am at All Saints and 8.55am at Beer. The registration period ends at 9.05am.**

**Pupils who arrive after the registration period has ended at 9.05am will be marked late** and should go straight to the school office to advise school that they are present and give a reason for their lateness. Any pupil who arrives after 9.15am with an unjustifiable reason for lateness will be marked as having an unauthorised absence for the morning session. It is vital that pupils notify the office to ensure that appropriate health and safety regulations are followed and that all pupils are accounted for.

Persistent lateness will be followed up by the school and Education Welfare Officer.

#### **5. School action: following up absences**

Class registers are passed to the school office at the end of the registration period. Where there are unexplained or unauthorised absences, the school will contact the parents or carers. If a pattern of unauthorised absences emerges, the school will contact the parent or carer to discuss possible reasons, seek advice from the Education Welfare Officer and identify any school support systems that could help.

Parents will be contacted if a pupil gives a reason for an unauthorised absence and there is any doubt about this.

Where students have been away for either short or long term due to absence other than holiday, the school will support that child when they re-enter school.

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**This policy will be reviewed annually**



# S2

## ABSENCE REQUEST FORM (exceptional circumstances only)

To: *The Principal / HeadTeacher of* .....

*I wish to apply to have an absence authorised for:*

Child's name ..... Class/Year .....

Child's name ..... Class/Year .....

Do you have another child who attends at a different school that will also be absent? If so, please state the child's name and school

.....

Date from ..... date to .....(inclusive)

Name of Parent(s)/Carer(s): .....

Address: .....

.....

Please fully explain the **exceptional circumstances** that you would like the school to consider. This section must be completed. Please continue on a separate sheet if needed.

Signature of Parent(s)/Carer(s) .....

Office use only		<input type="checkbox"/> Absence authorised Code ____ <input type="checkbox"/> Absence unauthorised
Date form received	No of school days absence requested	
		Signed _____ Headteacher

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**This portion to be returned to parents/carers**

Please note that even if this absence request is authorised you may still receive letters of concern from either the school or Local Authority if your child's attendance drops below a level that the school deems acceptable,

Pupil(s) name(s).....

Class/Year.....

- Absence authorised from .....to ..... (Inclusive)
- Absence unauthorised current attendance ..... % as of ...../...../20.....

Signed .....(HeadTeacher) Date.....

**NOTES TO PARENTS/CARERS**

The law does not grant parents/carers an automatic right to take their children out of school during term time. If the request is for an absence in term time you must have Parental Responsibility and be the parent/carer with whom the child normally lives. Permission **must** be sought in **advance**. If the circumstances relating to this request are considered exceptional and the absence is authorised by the school, the authorising of the absences will be conditional on the child(ren) attending satisfactory up to the date covered by this request.

**WARNING TO PARENTS**

If the school refuses your request and the child is still taken out of school, this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence. A significant amount of unauthorised absence may make you liable to a Penalty Notice for each child, payable by each parent/carer, or the subject of court proceedings which could result in a fine of up to £2,500 and/or a term of imprisonment of up to 3 months.

Parents should note that in normal circumstances, current practice is that only one penalty notice will be issued to a parent relating to the absence of a particular child within a two year period. Should a further period of unauthorised absence be recorded, then the parent(s) will normally be summonsed to appear at a Magistrates Court, unless an Education Supervision Order is considered more appropriate.

# AVOIDABLE ABSENCE IN TERM-TIME

**IMPORTANT:** Please read carefully the information below.

**WARNING:** If you allow your child to miss school in term time for an avoidable reason without obtaining the prior approval of the school, you may be issued with a Penalty Notice\* per parent per child, or made the subject of court proceedings under section 444 Education Act 1996.

As a parent/carer, you can demonstrate your commitment to your child's education by not allowing your child to miss school for anything other than an exceptional and unavoidable reason.

THE FACTS	THE LAW
<p>School aged pupils in Devon maintained schools are expected to attend punctually on the 190 days that the school is open. Whilst there are a number of unavoidable reasons why a pupil might be away from school (illness, medical appointments, exclusions etc), the legislation is clear that any avoidable absence may only be authorised by a school if there are exceptional circumstances.</p> <p><b>WHAT YOU SHOULD CONSIDER</b></p> <p>Research suggests that children who are taken out of school may never catch up on the learning they have missed. This may affect test results and can be particularly harmful if the child is studying for final year examinations.</p> <p>Children who struggle with English or Mathematics may also find it even harder to cope when they return to school, while younger children may find it difficult to renew friendships with their classmates.</p> <p>If the school is unable to authorise the absence and the child is still taken out of school, this will be recorded as <b>unauthorised absence</b> and you may receive a £60* fine per parent for each child.</p>	<p>The law allows schools to consider individual requests to authorise a future avoidable absence. However before the school can authorise any such requests, they must satisfy themselves that there are exceptional circumstances which justify such a decision. It is entirely the responsibility of the parent submitting the request to provide sufficient information/evidence in order to establish this fact. The request for leave must come from a parent with whom the child normally resides</p> <p>If a child then stays away from school for more than the authorised period this must be recorded as unauthorised absence and could be quoted in a prosecution for poor attendance.</p> <p>If the child is away from school for a total of four weeks or more, the school may have the option to take the child off roll subject to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006.</p> <p>In the case of unexpected extended absence, it is advisable that the parent fully informs the school as to the reasons. If a child is removed from roll, there is no guarantee that the child will regain a place at the school.</p>

**Unavoidable absence from school will be authorised if it is for the following reasons:**

- Genuine illness
- Unavoidable medical / dental appointments (but try to make these after school if at all possible)
- Days of religious observance
- Seeing a parent who is on leave from the armed forces
- External examinations
- When Traveller children go on the road with their parents

**Other examples of absence from school that will not be authorised:**

- Any type of shopping
- Looking after siblings or unwell parents
- Minding the house
- Birthdays
- Resting after a late night
- Relatives visiting or visiting relatives

Please contact your child's head teacher if you wish to discuss this issue.

**The law requires parents to ensure their children receive an efficient full time education, and every minute of every day is important. Please help them not to miss any of this valuable time.**

We hope that when you have read this leaflet you will consider that your child's education is too important to allow them to miss school for avoidable reasons.

\*Penalty Notice £60 if paid within 21 days, increasing to £120 if paid after 21 days and before 28 days