



ATTENDANCE POLICY

Cherry Trees School

Review date: Summer Term 2021

Next Review: Summer Term 2023

Principles

Promoting a positive attitude towards attendance at school is the responsibility of the whole school community. This includes governors, staff, parents/carers, pupils and any service provider linked to the school. All children should be at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. Permitting absence from school without good reason is an offence by the parent.

Cherry Trees School will promote good attendance through engaging pupils in a creative curriculum within a supportive, child-focussed environment. Good attendance by pupils will be duly recognised and rewarded.

Some children are reluctant to attend school from time to time. Any problems arising that can affect a child's attendance at school are best resolved between the school, the parents and the child. Parents are therefore encouraged to speak to school staff as soon as possible if they become aware of an issue that can affect their child's wellbeing or attendance at school. We operate an 'open door' policy for anyone wishing to speak to a member of the management team and will readily attempt to schedule meetings to fit around family/carer commitments. Home visits are also an option in some circumstances. In some cases it may be necessary to involve representatives of other agencies that work with the school such as the School Nurse or representatives of the Local Support Team (LST). We will use the Early Help Assessment process to support this.

If the child is reluctant to attend, it is never a good idea to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and this may make things worse. Advice and support is always available from staff.

Cherry Trees School is required to take an attendance register twice daily to show whether the pupil is present. Registers have to be marked in accordance with attendance codes provided by the Department for Education. Those codes indicate whether the absence is **AUTHORISED** or **UNAUTHORISED**. Parents **CANNOT** authorise their child's absence, this can only be done by the Executive Headteacher (or delegate) upon receipt of an acceptable reason for an absence.

- **AUTHORISED absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for reasons such as illness, medical appointments, bereavement etc. all of which need to be explained, preferably in writing or by personal visit to school or contact via telephone by a parent/carer (i.e. siblings and pupils themselves cannot provide a legal explanation).**
- **UNAUTHORISED absences are those which the Executive Headteacher does not consider reasonable and for which no permission has been given. For example, truancy, babysitting, missed the school bus, shopping for uniform, getting a hair cut, arriving too late during a session to be granted an attendance mark etc.**

This Attendance Policy includes a referral requirement that is designed to promote and safeguard the welfare of pupils. Cherry Trees School has a duty in law to bring to the attention of the Local Support Team (LST), any absence of 10 days or more in two consecutive half terms that may result in or any pupils that have not achieved 90% attendance in total.

In order to comply with the outcomes of the recent Supreme Court decision in the case of Isle of Wight Council v Platt [2017] and taking into account the law set out in London Borough of Bromley v C [2006] EWHC 1110 (Admin), Penalty Notices for leave in term time may be considered for any absence that is sufficient to fail the test of 'regular' attendance, but only **IF** the Executive Headteacher has not given permission for the child to be absent. (Authorised absences are not an offence). Overall attendance in these circumstances have been ruled irrelevant.

The focus is on unauthorised absences as well as 'concerning' authorised absences and patterns of non-attendance or persistent lateness. These cases will be discussed at regular intervals and an appropriate course of action will be decided upon.

Any parent that wants to speak directly with the Local Support Team is entitled to do so and contact details will be provided by the school upon request.

Procedures

Cherry Trees School applies the following procedures in deciding how to deal with individual absences:

1) LATE ARRIVAL - If a child is late arriving in school (e.g. medical appointment), the parent or carer bringing the child in must speak to a member of staff upon arrival to ensure that we are aware of their child's presence in school. The pupil **MUST** sign the late arrival register. This ensures we meet health and safety requirements e.g. in the unlikely event of a fire. It is helpful if parents/carers can inform school in advance of scheduled appointments that will result in an absence or late arrival. Lateness can be classed as unauthorised in some situations therefore, it is important that parents/carers keep the school well informed to help maintain accurate records. In order to comply with Department of Education regulations the school closes morning registration at 9.30am. Arrival to the Form Group after this time will result in the pupil receiving a late mark on the registers (L). The registers close at 9.30am. Arriving after this time will result in the pupil receiving a code U or with another absence code if that is more appropriate.

2) TERM-TIME HOLIDAY REQUESTS – Parents need to be aware that the school is not able to authorise holidays unless exceptional circumstances have been identified. In order for the Executive Headteacher to consider the request parents are required to fill in the appropriate form with as much notice as possible before planned holidays. The form can be obtained from the school's office.

3) ATTENDANCE - In the event of an unavoidable absence, parents are asked to contact the school on the **FIRST** day of absence by telephone 01902 894484 giving the reason for non-attendance. Additionally, a note can be provided to school at the time a pupil returns following a short period of absence. This note must be sent to the school office. Regular contact will be required for extended periods of absence as school is required to keep the Local Support Team updated.

At Cherry Trees School we will call daily to check non-attendance of pupils where parents have not informed us of the absence. This will be recorded on SIMS.

School has a legal DUTY to inform the Local Support Team (LST) where cases of '**UNAUTHORISED**' absences of 10 days or more occur. Likewise, school has to disclose irregular attendance, persistent lateness or cases where attendance falls below 90%. School is also required to provide an explanation for all such absences (where known) and evidence of action taken to secure information and/or provide support to the family.

Attendance Support Procedures - where appropriate:

Stage 1 – if, where appropriate, a pupil's attendance falls below 90% parents will receive a letter with an invitation to a dialogue with the school in order to improve the attendance.

Stage 2 – if, where appropriate, there is no improvement in the attendance, parents will be invited to a meeting with a Senior Leader to discuss further support. At this stage the school may decide to only authorise the absence when we receive a medical evidence.

Stage 3 – should the absences remain at the level below the target the school will invite parents to a formal meeting with a Pastoral Leader or a Senior Leader to discuss further support and actions if necessary.

In the absence of relevant information regarding poor attendance, school may take advice on further action to be taken. School may also undertake a review of the placement, if it felt that attendance elsewhere would be in the child's best interests and this is done with the full knowledge of parents/carers.

Every 4-6 weeks cases are reviewed and if no resolution is forthcoming other action will be considered e.g. continued input with targets and/or agreements drafted or referral on to another service/agency for input/support or investigation of statutory action. This may also include the Local Support Team (LST) issuing a Fixed Penalty Notice, where earlier interventions have failed to secure regular attendance of the child. Fixed Penalty Notices are decided and acted upon by the LST and school is required to provide details of absences and interventions. The legal process is managed by the LST and no funds secured by the process are received by the school. Once a case reaches this stage, legal interventions are outside the remit of the school.

Prior to a Penalty Notice being issued, a warning letter will be sent to parents/carers by the LST who will monitor attendance over the following 20 days. No action will be taken if there are no further **UNAUTHORISED** absences during that period. However parents may be liable to pay the Fixed Penalty Notice (currently £60) if unauthorised absences occur. Failure to pay within 28-days means the penalty value will increase. Cases are then brought before the Court by the LST if payments are not made. In such cases, parents/carers may be liable to pay any further court costs. Again, school is not involved in this process other than by providing information as required by law.

The LST may undertake further legal action in the event of unauthorised absences continuing. This can result in a prosecution which carries a fine of up to £2500 and can attract a custodial sentence. Any fines paid become 'public funds' i.e. payable to the Court and there is no financial advantage to school.

Cherry Trees School will already have attempted to provide support that avoids such action being taken and will continue to engage with families both during and after any legal action has commenced. Such action is the final resort undertaken by the LST and it is a legal requirement.

CHERRY TREES SCHOOL WILL MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO SUCCESSFULLY REINTEGRATE PUPILS AT ANY STAGE PRIOR TO, DURING OR FOLLOWING LEGAL PROCEEDINGS AND WE WILL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS/CARERS AND ALL INVOLVED PARTIES TO BRING ABOUT A POSITIVE OUTCOME.

SUMMARY

Cherry Trees School has a duty to publish attendance figures to parents and to promote good attendance. Equally, parents have a legal duty to ensure their child's regular attendance at school. We remain committed to working together, thus ensuring we jointly achieve as good an attendance rate as possible.

The person responsible for attendance at this school is Laura Slinn, Executive Headteacher.