



# ATTENDANCE POLICY

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<b>Date Approved:</b>	<b>July 2023</b>
<b>Review Date:</b>	<b>July 2025</b>

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<b>Approved:</b> <b>Date:</b>	<b>4 July 2023</b>
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## SUSSEX LEARNING TRUST STATEMENT ON ATTENDANCE

### 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Legislation includes Acts of Parliament and Department for Education (DfE) circulars dating from the 1944 Education Act to the present time including 'School Attendance – Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities'. These regulate the procedures and requirements placed upon staff, directors and parents in regard to students of school age being in regular full time attendance.
- 1.2 Central to raising standards in education and ensuring all students can fulfil their potential is an assumption so widely understood that it is insufficiently stated – students and 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 school.
- 1.3 At Sussex Learning Trust, we believe that students and pupils make greatest progress and achieve best when their attendance is regular and uninterrupted. Punctuality is a crucial personal characteristic valued by the academy and employers.
- 1.4 The Governors of each academy agree targets for attendance each year which are monitored by the Headteacher and the Deputy Headteacher responsible for pastoral care.

### 2. PROMOTING HIGH ATTENDANCE RATES

- 2.1 Each academy will:
  - 2.1.1 Set challenging targets.
  - 2.1.2 Ensure parents/carers understand why attendance is important.
  - 2.1.3 Make daily/weekly checks on absences.
  - 2.1.4 Maintain a late book. Communicate lateness to parents and apply sanctions as appropriate.
  - 2.1.5 Recognise outstanding attendance.
  - 2.1.6 Place students at risk of poor attendance and lateness on report for close monitoring.
  - 2.1.7 Work proactively with parents/carers, providing appropriate support to students with attendance issues.
  - 2.1.8 Involve outside agencies at an early stage.
  - 2.1.9 Highlight the importance of attendance through the curriculum.
  - 2.1.10 Use software (i.e Arbor, SIMS, Go4Schools) attendance modules to assist with monitoring.
  - 2.1.11 Scrutinise weekly absence data.
  - 2.1.12 Produce a complete individual record of attendance at reporting to parents evenings.
  - 2.1.13 Produce a summary attendance graph showing trends over four years.
  - 2.1.14 Contact parents informing them of matters of concern. Set up parent attendance planning meetings.
  - 2.1.15 Report attendance in the prospectus.
  - 2.1.16 Supply the DfE and/or local authority with a termly and annual attendance return.

### **3. PROMOTING A POSITIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT**

3.1 A positive learning environment ensures students want to attend. Accordingly the academy will:

- 3.1.1 Recognise good character, achievement, effort and attendance.
- 3.1.2 Have a wide range of extra-curricular activities.
- 3.1.3 Provide a range of teaching styles and approaches and a personalised curriculum.
- 3.1.4 Have high quality teaching resources.
- 3.1.5 Employ high quality specialist teachers.
- 3.1.6 Set challenging targets for each student and communicate these to parents.
- 3.1.7 Use the pastoral system as a means of identifying students for particular support.
- 3.1.8 Have a responsive, caring ethos.
- 3.1.9 Ensure a safe, caring atmosphere.
- 3.1.10 Maintain a pleasant, clean environment with attractive grounds.
- 3.1.11 Discuss issues of concern with students at the Student Council.
- 3.1.12 Employ restorative justice practices where appropriate.

### **4. RESPONSE TO POOR ATTENDANCE**

4.1 An attendance planning meeting will be held with the parents/carers and attendance targets agreed and monitored.

4.2 Pupil/student Entitlement may be informed and a request for a FPN (Fixed Penalty Notice) made.

### **5. LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

5.1 All absence requests must be made using the form 'Request for Absence in Exceptional Circumstances' and submitted to the authorised representative from the academy.

5.2 Leave of absence will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances. Leave is unlikely to be granted for the purposes of a family holiday.

### **6. PENALTY NOTICES**

6.1 Penalty Notices may be issued when:

6.1.1 There has been an unacceptable level of unauthorised absence and enforcement is necessary to improve attendance. Unauthorised absence is absence without permission from the authorised representative from the academy. This includes all unexplained or unjustified absences. The categories of authorised and unauthorised absence are explained in 'School Attendance – Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities'.

6.1.2 A minimum of ten sessions of unauthorised absence in a ten school week period will usually have occurred. However, a shorter period of time may be considered appropriate in some circumstances.

6.1.3 In the case of an unauthorised holiday taken during time if:

6.1.3a Parents have not sought permission from the authorised representative from the academy before taking their child out of school for a holiday in term time.

6.1.3b The authorised representative has refused the request but the absence occurs anyway, or

6.1.3c A student has not returned to the academy by the agreed date with no satisfactory explanation. And there have been ten sessions of unauthorised absence in a ten school week period.

6.1.4 A pupil/student is persistently late to school, ie arrives after the register has closed.

6.1.5 Under Truancy Initiatives carried out under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 powers, a minimum of five sessions of unauthorised absence may generate a Penalty Notice, if these unauthorised absences occur in the ten school weeks (maximum) after the child was stopped on a truancy sweep.

6.1.6 When an excluded child is present in a public place during school hours on a day which is one of the first five school days to which the exclusion relates, or where that exclusion is for a fixed period of five days or less, any of the days to which the exclusion relates, under the protocol for Section 103 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

6.1.7 No more than two Penalty Notices, per child, may be issued to the same parent in a twelve month period. Alternative action may need to be considered if school attendance offences re-occur, in the light of advice from Legal Services.

## **7. CHILDREN AT RISK OF MISSING EDUCATION**

7.1 The academy will inform the local authority of any student who is going to be deleted from the admission register where they:

7.1.1 Have been taken out of the academy by their parents and are being educated outside the school system, eg home education.

7.1.2 Have ceased to attend the academy and no longer live within reasonable distance of the academy.

7.1.3 Have a medical condition certified by the academy that the student is unlikely to be in a fit state of health to attend the academy.

7.1.4 Are in custody for a period of more than four months due to a final court order and the proprietor does not reasonably believe they will be returning to the academy at the end of that period, or

7.1.5 Have been permanently excluded.

7.2 The local authority will be notified in advance of the deletion, when the academy becomes aware that the deletion will be made.

7.3 The academy will inform the local authority of any student who fails to attend school regularly or has been absent without the school's permission for a continuous period of ten days or more.

## **1. Rationale**

CFS is committed to providing a full and effective education to all pupils and embraces the concept of equal opportunities for all. We endeavour to provide an environment where all pupils feel nurtured, challenged and inspired; feeling valued and welcome.

For a child to reach their full educational potential, a high level of school attendance is essential. We will consistently work towards a goal of 100% attendance for all children. Every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and their parents or carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance.

School attendance is subject to various education laws and this Attendance Policy is written to reflect these laws and the guidance produced by the Department for Education.

Each year we will review our overall attendance figures and set targets. These will reflect national and aspirational targets. Each week there will be a report which will track current attendance figures across both tiers of the School to generate data for action.

This policy will contain within it the procedures that we will use to meet our attendance targets.

## **2. Expectations of Attendance and Punctuality**

Executive Principal

- To oversee, direct and co-ordinate the School's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and punctuality.
- To ensure the Attendance Policy is consistently applied throughout the School.
- To work collaboratively with other staff to ensure high levels of attendance and punctuality, and where this is not the case, that timely interventions are put in place.
- To report on Attendance matters to the Governing Body at termly intervals.

Attendance and Family Liaison Manager

- To work with pupils and their families who are at risk of becoming persistently absent or late
- To ensure that records of attendance are complete and accurate
- To communicate with parents of pupils whose attendance is of concern
- To take responsibility for preparing case files and other paperwork for attendance interventions such as Penalty Notices and other such referrals.

#### Attendance Officer

- To have day to day oversight of all attendance matters
- To actively promote good attendance and punctuality

#### Heads of Year/Tutors/Class Teachers

- To ensure that all pupils are registered accurately at tutor times/ start of the school day.
- To review at regular intervals the attendance and punctuality of pupils under their care
- To intervene early with pupils who show signs of regular absence, lateness or truancy
- To regularly praise/reward pupils with excellent attendance
- To work collaboratively with the Head of Secondary, Head of Primary, Attendance and Family Liaison Manager and Attendance Officer to improve school attendance

#### Pupils

- To maintain high levels of attendance at school (national average % or above)
- To arrive to school and lessons on time.
- To attend scheduled public examinations where dates have been published in advance

#### Parents and Carers

- To support the school with your child in achieving 100% attendance
- To report your child's absence/lateness to the school Attendance Officer at the earliest opportunity
- To avoid taking your child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments
- To only request leave of absence in advance and only in exceptional circumstances

#### Classroom Staff

- To ensure that all pupils are registered accurately at the beginning of each lesson (usually within the first 10 minutes)
- To address early signs of absence/lateness to their lessons with pupils and their parents/ carers and record this accurately on the register
- To communicate persistent absence/lateness concerns to their Head of Year/ Attendance and Family Liaison Manager/ Attendance Officer.

### 3. Lateness

It is important to be on time for the start of all lessons so as not to miss vital learning time and not to cause disruption to the learning of others once the lesson has started. Morning registration for pupils will commence at 8.20am. Pupils arriving between 8.30-9.15 will be recorded as being late. Pupils arriving after 9.15am will be recorded as unauthorised late to school. The exception is for pupils in the Reception classes who do not start school until 8.35am. Registration for this year group will begin at 8.40am. Reception class pupils who arrive between 8.45 and 9.15 will be recorded as late. Reception Pupils arriving after 9.15am will be recorded as unauthorised late to school.

Pupils arriving late to school must report to the Main Office to be signed into school and to explain their reason for being late. The Attendance Officer will decide if the lateness is authorised or unauthorised, record the attendance mark and number of minutes late.

Where persistent lateness gives cause for concern, a meeting with the relevant Class teacher/Tutor will be arranged to discuss what support can be offered.

Persistent unauthorised lateness to school (10 sessions) will generate a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN). However, the school will seek to work with families to improve punctuality prior to requesting WSCC to issue an FPN.

The afternoon registration for pupils commences at 12pm.

### 4. School Procedures

#### FIRST DAY ABSENCE

If a child is absent, parents/carers are asked to email our Attendance Officer: [absence@chichesterfreeschool.org.uk](mailto:absence@chichesterfreeschool.org.uk) stating the pupil's name, year group and reason for absence. If it is not possible to email the attendance officer then please call the school on 01243 792690 ext 233 and leave a message.

If no contact is made by parents/carers explaining the absence, the School will try to phone to secure an explanation.

This process should be repeated daily if the absence persists.

If a child's continued absence raises concerns then communication will be made with home by the Attendance and Family Liaison Manager. If a child's absence drops below 90% it could require investigating by Pastoral staff and reporting to the Executive Principal. Further communication with home may be deemed appropriate at this stage.

### **THIRD DAY (or more) ABSENCE**

If the parent/carer has not contacted the School or the child has not been seen, the School may contact the Police and request a Police welfare check.

### **PERSISTENT ABSENCE (10% OR MORE ABSENCES)**

Either authorised or unauthorised. A child who is persistently absent is at risk of failing to achieve their full potential within the school environment.

The School will contact the parents of all pupils whose attendance is deemed as persistent to inform them of the situation and remind them of their responsibilities.

### **FREQUENT ABSENCE**

It is the responsibility of the Attendance officer to be aware of and bring attention to, any emerging attendance concerns at least weekly, reporting to the Attendance and Family Liaison Manager in the first instance.

In cases where a pupil begins to develop a pattern of absences, the School will try to resolve the problem with the parents/carers through regular communication and meetings.

### **PROMOTING ATTENDANCE**

The School will use opportunities as they arise to remind parents/carers, that it is their responsibility to ensure that their child/children receive their education.

The Home School Agreement which is agreed by parents/ carers on accepting a place at CFS states that parents/carers 'ensure that my child attends school regularly and on time and to contact the school with an explanation for any absence'.

### **Holidays in Term Time:**

- Only the Executive Principal can authorise a leave of absence
- An email needs to be sent to [absence@chichesterfreeschool.org.uk](mailto:absence@chichesterfreeschool.org.uk) detailing the date of the absence and why the absence is being requested
- A four week time period is necessary in order for the School to give due consideration to the request
- Once the Executive Principal has made the decision the parent will be notified whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised



- A school can, if needed, change an unauthorised absence to authorised and vice versa if new information is presented. An example of this would be where a parent has stated their child is unwell and there is evidence they have been on holiday

### **Types of Absence**

Pupils are expected to attend school every day for the entire duration of the academic year unless there is an exceptional reason for the absence. There are two main categories of absences:

- **Authorised Absence:** is when the School has accepted the explanation offered as satisfactory justification for absence, or given approval in advance for such an absence. If no explanation is received, the absence cannot be authorised.
- **Unauthorised Absence:** is when the School has not received a reason for the absence or has not approved a child's absence from school after a first day of absence notification or leave of absence request from a parent. This includes:
  - Parents giving their children permission to be off unnecessarily such as for shopping, birthdays or to look after siblings
  - truancy before or during the school day
  - school absences which have not been explained
  - where a child is identified as being 'persistently absent'

### **PENALTY NOTICES**

Section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 empowers designated officers, Head Teachers and the Police to issue penalty notices in cases of unauthorised absences from school. The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2004 came into force on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2004 and have recently been amended in the Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013.

In law, parents/carers are committing an offence if they fail to ensure the regular attendance of their child of compulsory school age at which the child is registered, unless absence has been authorised by the school.

Legal measures will only be considered where:

- The child or family do not require the support from any agency to improve attendance or where support has been refused or unsuccessful
- The child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence and parents are complicit in the child's absence

A Penalty Notice may be issued in the following circumstances:

If a minimum of 10 sessions or five school days of unauthorised absence are taken during 10 school weeks for:

- Overt Truancy
- Parentally-condoned absences
- Holiday taken in term-time
- Persistent late arrival at school (after registration has closed)

### **What is a Penalty Notice?**

A Penalty Notice is a fine issued to each parent/carer who condoned (or was responsible for the child) during the period of unauthorised absence for which the fine has been issued. For each case the School or County will decide whether a Penalty Notice is issued to one or more parent/carers for each child. NB this could mean four Penalty Notices for a family with two siblings, both with unauthorised absence for holiday, ie one Penalty Notice for each child to each parent/carer.

### **How much is a Penalty Notice?**

Each Penalty Notice carries a fine of £60 if paid within 21 days of the Penalty Notice being posted. If the fine is not paid within 21 days, the penalty is automatically increased to £120 if paid within 28 days. If the fine remains unpaid then WSCC will consider prosecution for the non-attendance.

### **ATTENDANCE AWARDS**

The school will use the following system to reward pupils who have good or improving attendance:

- Attendance is monitored by the Tutors, Attendance and Family Liaison Manager, the Attendance Officer and the Pastoral Team
- Attendance information is reported to parents through the termly reporting cycle.
- In Secondary, good attendance is acknowledged on Tutor Notices for the tutor group with the best attendance and the House with the best attendance in termly assemblies.

## **5. The Registration System**

The School will use a computerised system and/or manual paper registers for keeping the school attendance records. The School currently uses SIMS for its attendance record keeping.

The following national codes will be used to record attendance information

<b>CODE</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>MEANING</b>
/	Present (AM)	Present
\	Present (PM)	Present
<b>B</b>	Educated off site (NOT Dual registration)	Approved Educational Activity
<b>C</b>	Other Authorised Circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)	Authorised Absence
<b>D</b>	Dual registration (i.e. pupil attending other establishment)	Approved Educational Activity
<b>E</b>	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised Absence
<b>F</b>	Extended family holiday (agreed)	Authorised Absence
<b>G</b>	Family holiday (NOT agreed or days in excess of agreement)	Unauthorised Absence
<b>H</b>	Family Holiday (agreed)	Authorised Absence
<b>I</b>	Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments)	Authorised Absence
<b>J</b>	Interview	Approved Educational Activity
<b>L</b>	Late (before registers closed)	
<b>M</b>	Medical/Dental appointments	Authorised Absence
<b>N</b>	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised Absence
<b>O</b>	Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code/description)	Unauthorised Absence
<b>P</b>	Approved sporting activity	Approved Educational Activity
<b>R</b>	Religious observance	Authorised Absence
<b>S</b>	Study Leave	Authorised Absence
<b>T</b>	Traveller absence	Authorised Absence
<b>U</b>	Late (after registers closed)	Unauthorised Absence
<b>V</b>	Educational visit or trip	Approved Educational Activity
<b>W</b>	Work Experience	Approved Educational Activity
<b>X</b>	Untimetabled sessions for non-compulsory school age absence	Not counted in possible attendances
<b>Y</b>	Enforced closure	Not counted in possible attendances
<b>Z</b>	Pupil yet on roll	Not counted in possible attendances
<b>#</b>	School closed to pupils	Not counted in possible attendances

**NB Registers are taken electronically and these codes are available on SIMS to use.**

Registers by law must be kept for at least three years and safely stored.