Churchfields Primary School

**Attendance Policy 2024-2025**

1. **Aims**

At Churchfields Primary School, we are committed to providing the best possible educational experience to all children. We believe that if children are to fulfil their potential, regular attendance is vital, and we do all we can to support maximum attendance for all. Any problems that impede full attendance will be identified and addressed as speedily as possible.

We are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through a whole school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

* + - Promoting good attendance
    - Promoting good punctuality
    - Reducing absence, including persistent (90% and under) and severe absence (50% and under)
    - Ensuring every child has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
    - Acting early to address patterns of absence
    - Building strong relationships with families to ensure children have the support in place to attend school

We give a high priority to communicating with families about the importance of regular and punctual attendance. We recognise families have a vital role to play, as well as a legal responsibility. There is a need to maintain strong home/school links and communication systems which we can rely on whenever there is concern about attendance.

If there are problems that affect a child's attendance we will identify, investigate and work in partnership with families and, where appropriate, external agencies to resolve them as quickly and efficiently as possible.

The **Designated Attendance Lead** (Deputy Headteacher) has oversight for whole-school attendance. They are responsible for ensuring registers are completed accurately, communication is made with families where clear concerns exist, liaison is carried out with the attendance service and other appropriate agencies, the Headteacher is briefed about attendance issues, statistical returns for legitimate agencies are made as and when they are required, and records of concerns are kept.

Families should note *‘It is your legal responsibility to ensure that your child is receiving a full-time education in accordance with Section 7 Education Act 1996. Failure to ensure that your child attends school regularly and punctually can result in you being issued with a Penalty Notice or prosecuted for an offence contrary to Section 444(1) Education Act 1996’*.

1. **Legislation and Guidance**

This policy meets the requirements of the guidance [Working together to improve school attendance](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance)  from the Department for Education (DfE) and refers to statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures. These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

* Part 6 of The Education Act 1996
* Part 3 of The Education Act 2002
* Part 7 of The Education and Inspections Act 2006
* The Education (Child Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments)
* The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 This policy also refers to the DfE’s guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

1. **Roles and Responsibilities**

3.1 The Local Governing Board (LGB) is responsible for:

* + - Promoting the importance of school attendance and punctuality
    - Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
    - Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
    - Monitoring attendance figures and punctuality

• Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

* 1. The headteacher is responsible for:
* Implementation of this policy
* Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
* Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to the LGB
* Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual children
* Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance and punctuality strategies
* Ensure all staff are aware of the registration process and receive in-service training on registration regulations and education law
* Liaising with Bromley around the issuing of fixed-penalty notices, where necessary and/or authorising another senior member of staff in the trust to be able to do so.

3.3 The designated attendance lead (DHT) is responsible for:

* Leading, championing and improving attendance across the school
* Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement and maintenance
* Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
* Having an oversight of data analysis and comparisons to national data
* Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance and punctuality identified through data
* Evaluating targeted intervention and support to children and families
* Regularly monitoring and evaluating progress in attendance
* Establishing and maintaining effective systems for tackling absence, and making sure they are followed by all staff
* Liaising with children, families and external agencies, where needed or delegating this to a member of staff
* Building close and productive relationships with parents to discuss and tackle attendance issues
* Creating intervention or reintegration plans in partnership with children and their parents/carers
* Delivering targeted intervention and support to children and families.

3.4 Designated staff dealing with attendance are responsible for:

* + - Monitoring and analysing attendance data
    - Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance and the headteacher
    - Working with the school’s attendance service to address attendance concerns, including persistent absence and punctuality
    - Supporting the headteacher (or staff authorised by the headteacher) to consider fixed-penalty notices.

3.5 Class teachers are responsible for:

* + - Recording daily attendance, using the correct codes, and submitting this information as soon as possible after morning and afternoon registration
    - Consistently promoting high attendance expectations with families
    - Arranging conversations and meetings with parents where a child’s attendance is becoming a concern. Where concerns persist, teachers should liaise with senior leaders as appropriate.

3.6 TAs are responsible for:

* + - Consistently promoting high attendance expectations with children and parents
    - Supporting teachers to have informal conversations with parents where a child’s attendance is becoming a concern.

3.7 Office staff will:

* + - Take calls, emails and other communication from families about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on SIMS
    - Carry out first day messaging and calling, when no message has been received by the family
    - Ensure any notes received from families are recorded on the child’s attendance record
    - Liaise with relevant staff about attendance concerns
    - Produce attendance data as required.

3.8 Other school staff will:

• Welcome children back to school

• Consistently promote high attendance.

3.9 Parents & carers are expected to:

• Make sure their child attends school every day and on time

• Call the school to report their child’s absence by the start of the school day on the first day of the absence (and each subsequent day of absence as required), and advise when they are expected to return

• Provide the school with more than one emergency contact number for their child

• Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day

• Not remove their child from school for a leave of absence including a holiday.

3.10 Children are expected to:

• Attend school every day on time.

1. **Procedures**

The performance indicator by which we judge the success of our efforts is set each year by our overall attendance figure. While 100% attendance is the ideal, in many cases, legitimate illness or other factors can prevent it. Such attendance is, where it occurs, clearly "excellent”. On the other hand, attendance which falls below 95%, where a child is known to be in reasonable health and there are no other extenuating circumstances, may give cause for concern.

Poor attendance disadvantages children. We aim to ensure the children attend regularly and on time, and where this is not the case, staff follow a staged procedure designed to encourage consistent attendance.

4.1: Daily Procedures

* We use SIMS to support the recording, reporting and monitoring of attendance and absence.
* It is families’ responsibility to contact the school on the first day their child is absent, before the start of the school day. This is a safeguarding requirement, so all parties know the child is safe.
* Families should the school every day a child is absent and inform when their child is returning
* If no contact is received from the family of an absent child on the first morning of absence, the school will contact the parent by text message, email or telephone, as appropriate.
* If a child remains unaccounted for, staff may make a home visit as appropriate, considering any safeguarding concerns.

4.2 Periodical Procedures

* Designated members of staff meet regularly, to monitor and review whole school attendance and individual children whose attendance is either declining, persistently absent or at risk of becoming persistently absent, severely absent or at risk of becoming severely absent.
* Attendance and absence data are regularly reviewed, together with emerging and historic patterns, to identify children or cohorts needing additional support with their attendance. This analysis is used to provide targeted support to children and their families.
* A call may be made to the family by a member of attendance staff, to discuss attendance where this is declining and/or a cause for concern.
* Families may be invited in for a review meeting, or a home visit being arranged, as appropriate to discuss how support can be offered by school.
* We will work with families to identify barriers, agree a plan of action and offer appropriate school support, signposting, or involvement of other agencies (eg. Early Help), and/or a referral to the Educational Welfare Officer.
* We will plan and implement appropriate support to address any identified needs of the child, including SEN, disabilities, or mental or physical ill health.
* Children leaving school during the day for any reason, such as for medical appointments, must be collected and returned, in person, to the school office. Written evidence of medical appointments is to be shown, if requested.
* An attendance leaflet will be given to all new families on entry (see Appendix A).
* Specific punctuality letters are sent to families where this is a concern and meetings may be arranged, as appropriate.
* General attendance and punctuation reminders are included in regular school newsletters and communication with families.
* The school may implement other statutory interventions where appropriate including Attendance and Punctuality Contracts and Notices to Improve (see 5.3 & 5.4).

4.3 Annual Procedures

* Attendance figures for the year are reported in every child’s Annual School Report, including the total number of missed school days/weeks.

1. **Authorised & Unauthorised Absence**

5.1 Authorised Absence

Absence will be authorised for illness and religious observance. It is the school who must decide whether to authorise absence, not the family.

Requests for medical evidence will be made for absence due to illness, if we consider the level of attendance and/or illness to be of concern.

We will authorise absence from school for certain educational activities, or to attend other schools or settings.

We will only grant a leave of absence to a child during term time if the request meets the specific circumstances set out in [The School Attendance (Child Registration) (England) Regulations 2024](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2024/208/made#:~:text=11.,an%20%E2%80%9Cauthorised%20person%E2%80%9D).&text=(b)regulated%20employment%20abroad.)

These circumstances are:

* + Taking part in a regulated performance
  + Attending an interview or public examination
  + A temporary, time-limited part-time timetable
  + Exceptional\* circumstances (exceptional does not relate to the family, but the circumstance. For example, a once in a lifetime holiday or previous excellent attendance are not deemed exceptional circumstances).

If a family wishes to request such leave, they should make a written application at the earliest opportunity. The Headteacher and/or designated staff will consider each request individually, taking the specifics of each case into account, and inform the family as soon as possible in writing, whether the request has been granted or not.

Leave of absence will not be granted for a child to take part in protest activity during school hours.

\*As a leave of absence will only be granted in exceptional circumstances, it is unlikely a leave of absence will be granted for the purposes of a family holiday.

Other valid reasons for authorised absence include (but are not limited to):

* + - * Illness (including mental-health illness) and medical/dental appointments
      * Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the child’s family belongs. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the relevant religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart.
      * Families travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the child is attending educational provision If the child is currently suspended or excluded from school (and no alternative provision has been made)
      * Previous excellent attendance.

Other reasons the school may authorise non-attendance, which are not classified as absence, include (but are not limited to):

* Attending an offsite approved educational activity, sporting activity or visit or trip arranged by the school
* Attending another school at which the child is also registered (dual registration)
* Attending provision arranged by the local authority.

5.2 Unauthorised Absence

Where permission has been refused and the family proceeds with the leave of absence, this is recorded as unauthorised absence.

If the school believes a family holiday has been taken despite not receiving a request, the local authority will consider the school’s evidence and may issue a penalty notice.

5.3 Penalty Notices

If unauthorised leave during term time is taken, a Penalty Notice may be issued.

A Penalty Notice is issued to each parent for each child that is taken out of school. The national framework for penalty notices for unauthorised absence of 10 sessions (5 school days) in any 10-week rolling period is as follows:

* The first penalty notice issued to a parent in respect of a particular child for unauthorised term time leave or holiday, will be charged at £160 if paid within 28 days. This will be reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.
* A second period of unauthorised term time leave or holiday in respect of the same child within a rolling 3-year period, will be charged at a flat rate of £160 if paid within 28 days.
* For a third period of unauthorised term time leave or holiday within a rolling 3-year period, a penalty notice will not be issued. The local authority will instead take further legal action, usually a prosecution.

5.4 Notice to Improve

If the support offered is appropriate, but families do not engage with offers of support, the school may offer a Notice to Improve to give families a final chance to engage with support.

Notices to Improve will be issued in line with processes set out in the Bromley local code of conduct.

They will include:

* Details of the child’s attendance record and of the offences
* The benefits of regular attendance and the duty of parents under section 7 of the Education Act 1996
* Details of the support provided so far
* Opportunities for further support, or to access previously provided support that was not engaged with
* A clear warning that a penalty notice may be issued if attendance doesn’t improve within the improvement period, along with details of what sufficient improvement looks like, which will be decided on a case-by-case basis
* A clear timeframe of between 3 and 6 weeks for the improvement period
* The grounds on which a penalty notice may be issued before the end of the improvement period.

1. **Supporting children who are absent or returning to school** 
   1. Children absent due to complex barriers to attendance

Where a child has an education health and care plan (EHCP) and their attendance falls, or the school becomes aware of barriers to attendance that relate to their needs, we will inform the Bromley EHCP Team.

* 1. Children absent due to mental or physical ill health or SEND

We will work with every family, along with agencies involved, to support removing barriers to attendance.

* 1. Children returning to school after a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence

We will work with every family, along with agencies involved, to ensure a smooth transition back into school.

**7. Children Missing Education**

No child should be removed from the school roll without consultation between the Headteacher and Education Welfare Officer, where appropriate. Where a child is missing from education, Local Authority guidance will be followed by completing a Child Missing Education referral for the following circumstances:

* If the whereabouts of the child is unknown and the school have failed to locate them
* The family has notified the school that they are leaving the area but no Common Transfer Form (child file) has been requested by another school. Also see Child Protection Policy.

**8. Elective Home Education**

If a parent advises they wish to educate their child at home, they will need to put their intention in writing to both the school and the Local Authority.

**9. Monitoring Arrangements**

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority and/or DfE is updated, and as a minimum every three years.