



Cornerstone Church of England (VA) Primary School



*Building our Community
with Love, Forgiveness and Hope*

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Reviewed by	Teaching & Learning Committee	Authorised by	Full Governing Body
Last Review	Autumn 2016	Date	
Next Review	Autumn 2017	Review Cycle	Annually

Cornerstone CE Primary School is committed to providing a full-time education of the highest quality for all our pupils, which maximises opportunities for each pupil to learn and grow.

The governors and staff at Cornerstone CE Primary School are committed to a common objective of keeping the children and staff of the school safe, in a caring environment where every member of our community is valued. We ensure that consistent effective safeguarding procedures are in place in order to support families, children and staff of the school.

It is our aim to consistently strive to achieve a goal of 100% attendance for all pupils. The whole school attendance figure for the academic year 2015-2016 was 96.6%. The target figure for the academic year 2016-2017 is 97%.

National guidance

This policy was written in line with the DfE Guidance for School Attendance (2014). This guidance states that schools should:

1. Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence
2. Ensure every child has access to full time education
3. Act early to address patterns of absence

Parents must perform their legal duty by ensuring children of compulsory school age who are registered to a school attend regularly and that all pupils are punctual to their lessons.

Links to national and county advice and guidance can be found at:

1. Department for Education (DfE) 'School Attendance' 2014:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance>

2. Hampshire Local Authority guidance documentation:
<http://www3.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/lba-resources-for-schools/atten-guidance.htm>

Good attendance is important because:

- National statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and absence below 95%
- Regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically
- Regular attenders find school routines, school work and friendships easier to manage

Promoting Good Attendance and Punctuality

The foundation for good attendance is positive and supportive home school partnerships. The Home / School Agreement contains details of how we will work with families.

We will provide general information about attendance legislation and figures through our communication. We will work with individual families where the child's attendance falls below 90%. We will consider all requests for term time leave under exceptional circumstances, always endeavouring to have a conversation with the families who request leave.

Lateness / Punctuality

It is important to be on time at the start of the morning and afternoon school sessions. The classroom doors are opened for pupils at 8.45 am. Registration opens at 8.50 am and all pupils are expected to be in their classroom by 9.00 am. At this time school gates are locked to secure the safety of the site. Registration closes at 9.10 am. Afternoon registration opens at 1.00 pm and closes at 1.10 pm.

Arrival after the close of registration will be marked as unauthorised absence code 'U' in line with county and DfE guidance. If a pupil is late due to a medical appointment they will receive an authorised absence code of 'M'.

On-going and repeated lateness is considered as unauthorised absence and will count towards the 10 sessions of absence after which a Penalty Notice will be sent to parents.

What to do if my child is absent?

You must contact the school as soon as possible on the first day of absence. If your child is absent and we have not heard from you we will telephone to establish their whereabouts.

Please note that if your child has not be seen and contact with you has not been established after three days of absence the school is required to start a child missing in education procedures as set down by Hampshire County Council Guidance.

Current Responsibilities and Requirements

Parents, schools and Local Authorities (LA's) share legal responsibility for school attendance (1996 Education Act). Parents of children of compulsory school age must ensure that they receive an efficient and suitable full-time education, either at school or otherwise. If absence is frequent or continuous, except where there is clear medical reasons, staff will discuss the need and reasons for absence with parents and will encourage them to keep absences to a minimum.

We will ensure we keep an accurate attendance register on which, at the beginning of each morning and during an afternoon session, a pupil will be marked present or absent. If absent, the mark must show whether the absence was authorised or unauthorised. If authorisation for absence is requested for a pupil (there must be exceptional circumstances), parents/carers are asked to complete a Leave of Absence Request Form (Appendix 1). The decision whether or not to authorise an absence will always rest with the school.

The publication of data on attendance forms part of the process of accountability to parents and the wider community. Rates of absence must be reported to parents through their child's report. We also report whole school and class attendance rates through our half-termly newsletters.

An information leaflet will be sent to the parents of any child whose attendance falls below 90%, and the headteacher will discuss the matter and implications for their child's education with the parents either on the phone or in person. If a child misses 10% or more of their schooling across an academic year for whatever reason they are defined under Hampshire County Council guidelines as persistent absentees. This attendance data will be checked in monthly meetings between the headteacher and Senior Admin Officer.

Parents will:

- inform the school on the first day of any absence and discuss any planned absences with the class teacher
- Support the school in aiming for 97% attendance for their child
- Only request leave of absence if it is in exceptional circumstances

Authorised absence can be:

- Sickness or unavoidable cause
- Emergency medical or dental appointments which cannot be arranged outside school hours
- Child travels on LA provided transport - this is unavailable and they have no other means of travelling to or from school
- The child's participation in an approved public performance i.e. music or sporting
- Days of religious observance
- Leave with parents - at the discretion of the Headteacher and where there are clear exceptional circumstances.
- Bereavement of a close family member

Unauthorised absence includes:

- Any absence which the school has not been informed about, either by letter or telephone
- Parents giving their children permission to be absent unnecessarily, e.g. shopping, birthdays or looking after siblings
- Family 'extended leave' (holiday) that has not been authorised prior to departure by the school or falls during statutory assessment periods e.g. SATS, phonic screening
- Any extended leave that does not have exceptional circumstances or any other refused leave of absence request by the headteacher

Exceptional Circumstances:

- Exceptional is defined by the school as rare, significant, unavoidable and short
- These may include a bereavement of a close family member, or a leave of absence for a service family where there has been a prolonged tour of duty by a parent. Individual circumstances and attendance data will be considered when making this decision.
- These will never include financial factors or seasonal work patterns.
- A parent's definition of these circumstances may differ to those of the school.
- **A standard family 'holiday' in term time will never be classed as exceptional circumstance and will always be refused by the school.**

Penalty Notices for Non Attendance and other Legal Measures:

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

Legal Measures for tackling persistent absence or lateness

Hampshire Schools and Hampshire County Council will use the full range of legal measures to secure good attendance. Legal measures will only be considered through a referral to Hampshire's Attendance Legal Panels where:

1. The child or family do not require the support from any agency to improve the attendance
2. The child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence within a 100 session (50 school day) term-time period

The following legal measures are for pupils of compulsory school age who are registered at a school:

- Parenting contracts set at Education Planning Meetings
- Parenting orders
- Penalty notices
- Education Supervision Orders
- Prosecution

Where a child has unauthorised absence the school must enforce Hampshire's Code of Conduct for issuing Penalty Notices or follow its guidance on other Legal Measures for Non-Attendance. The Code of Conduct is a statutory document that ensures that powers for legal sanctions are applied consistently and fairly across all schools and their families within the authority. A copy is available from

<http://www3.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/attendance-guidancefor-parents/possible-penalties.htm>

The Code of Conduct states that:

Schools or Hampshire Local Authority will issue a Penalty Notice for any unauthorised absence where the pupil has been:

- absent for 10 or more half-day sessions (five school days) of unauthorised
- absence during any 100 possible school sessions – these do not need to be consecutive
- persistently late (coded *U*) for up to 10 sessions (five days) after the register has closed
- persistently late before the close of the register (coded *L*), but the school has met with parents and has clearly communicated that they will categorise as unauthorised any further lateness (code *O*), and where the threshold of 10 sessions (five days) has been met
- absent for any public examinations of which dates are published in advance
- absent for any formal school assessments, tests or examinations where the dates have been published in advance

Unless the issuing of a Penalty Notice would conflict would conflict with other intervention strategies in place or other sanctions already being processed.