



# Urchfont Primary School

## Primary Attendance and Absence Policy

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Signed by:

\_\_\_\_\_ Head Teacher      Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Chair of governors      Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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## **Statement of intent**

Urchfont Primary School believes that in order to facilitate teaching and learning, good attendance is essential. Pupils cannot achieve their full potential if they do not regularly attend school.

We are committed to:

- Ensuring parents follow the framework set in section 7 of the Education Act 1996, which states that the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause them to receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude, and to any SEND they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.
- Promoting and modelling good attendance behaviour.
- Ensuring equality and fairness of treatment for all.
- Implementing our policies in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.
- Early intervention and working with other agencies to ensure the health and safety of our pupils.

## 1. Legal framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Education Act 1996
- Equality Act 2010
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (As amended)
- The Children (Performances and Activities) (England) Regulations 2014
- Children and Young Persons Act 1963
- DfE (2020) 'School attendance'
- DfE (2015) 'Child performance and activities licensing legislation in England'
- DfE (2021) 'Keeping children safe in education 2021'
- DfE (2016) 'Children missing education'
- DfE (2021) 'Improving school attendance: support for schools and local authorities'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Complaints Procedures Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Children Missing Education Policy
- School Business Manager Home Visit Policy
- Pupils with Additional Health Needs Attendance Policy

## 2. Roles and responsibilities

The governing board has overall responsibility for:

- Monitoring the implementation of this policy and all relevant procedures across the school.
- Ensuring that this policy, as written, does not discriminate on any grounds, including, but not limited to, ethnicity/national origin, culture, religion, gender, disability or sexual orientation.
- Handling complaints regarding this policy as outlined in the school's Complaints Policy.
- Having regard to 'Keeping children safe in education' when making arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
- Ensuring there is a Children Missing Education Policy in place and that this is regularly reviewed and updated.

The Head Teacher is responsible for:

- The day-to-day implementation and management of this policy and all relevant procedures across the school.
- Ensuring all parents are aware of the school's attendance expectations and procedures.
- Ensuring that every pupil has access to full-time education and will act as early as possible to address patterns of absence.

Staff are responsible for:

- Following this policy and ensuring pupils do so too.
- Ensuring this policy is implemented fairly and consistently.
- Modelling good attendance behaviour.
- Using their professional judgement and knowledge of individual pupils to inform decisions as to whether any welfare concerns should be escalated.
- Where designated, taking the attendance register at the relevant times during the school day.

The School Business Manager is responsible for informing the LA of any pupil being deleted from the admission and attendance registers if they:

- Are being educated from home.
- No longer live within a reasonable distance of the registered school.
- Have an authorised medical note.
- Have been permanently excluded.

Pupils are responsible for:

- Attending their lessons and any agreed activities when at school.
- Arriving punctually to school
- Ensuring they register with their class teacher before going off to any scheduled activities taking place during registration (such as music lessons).

Parents are responsible for:

- Providing accurate and up-to-date contact details.
- Providing the school with more than one emergency contact number.
- Updating the school if their details change.
- The attendance of their children at school.
- Promoting good attendance with their children.

### **3. Definitions**

The following definitions apply for the purposes of this policy:

#### **Absence:**

- Arrival at school after the register has closed
- Not attending school for any reason

#### **Authorised absence:**

- An absence for sickness for which the school has granted leave
- Medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall during school time, for which the school has granted leave
- Religious or cultural observances for which the school has granted leave
- An absence due to a family emergency

### **Unauthorised absence:**

- Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily or without reason
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Arrival at school after the register has closed
- Absence due to shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Absence due to day trips and holidays in term-time which have not been agreed
- Leaving school without prior authorisation during the school day

### **Persistent absenteeism:**

- Missing 10 percent or more of schooling across the year for any reason

## **4. Training of staff**

The school will recognise that early intervention can prevent poor attendance. As such, staff will receive training in identifying potentially at-risk pupils as part of their induction and refresher training.

Staff will receive training to ensure they understand that increased absence from school could indicate a safeguarding concern, and know how such concerns should be managed.

## **5. Pupil expectations**

Pupils are expected to attend school every day and keep their attendance at, or above, 96 percent throughout the year.

## **6. Pupils at risk of persistent absence (PA)**

The school will ensure it provides support to pupils at risk of persistent absence (PA), in conjunction with all relevant external authorities, where necessary.

Where a pupil at risk of PA is also at increased risk of harm, the school will work in conjunction with all relevant authorities, e.g. social services, to support the pupil in line with the school's duty of care.

The school attendance system will be used to give an accurate and informative view of attendance, reasons for absence and patterns within groups, including:

- Children in need
- LAC
- Pupils who are eligible for FSM
- Pupils with EAL
- Pupils with SEND

## **7. Absence procedures**

Parents will be required to contact the school office via telephone or email as soon as possible on the first day of their child's absence.

A telephone call and/or email will be made to the parent of any pupil who has not reported their child's absence on the first day that they do not attend school.

The school will always follow up any absences in order to:

- Ascertain the reason for the absence.
- Ensure the proper safeguarding action is being taken.
- Identify whether the absence is authorised or not.
- Identify the correct code to use to enter the data onto the school census system.

In the case of PA, arrangements will be made for parents to speak to the School Business Manager or Head Teacher. The school will inform the LA of the details of pupils who have missed 10 school days or more without authorisation in accordance with the LA's procedures.

If a pupil's attendance drops below 85 percent, the School Business Manager and Head Teacher will be informed, and a formal meeting arranged with the pupil's parent.

Where a pupil has not returned to school for 10 days after an authorised absence, or is absent from school without authorisation for 20 consecutive school days, the school will remove the pupil from the admissions register if the school and the LA have failed to establish the whereabouts of the pupil after making reasonable enquiries.

## **8. Parental involvement**

The school will build respectful relationships with parents and families to ensure their trust and engagement. Open and honest communication will be maintained with pupils and their families about the expectations of school life, attendance and performance so that they understand what to expect and what is expected of them. The school will liaise with other agencies working with pupils and their families to support attendance, e.g. social services.

Parents will be expected to:

- Treat staff with respect.
- Actively support the work of the school.
- Call staff for help when they need it.
- Communicate with the school about possible circumstances which may affect their child's attendance or require support.

## **9. Attendance register**

Designated staff members will take the attendance register at the start of each school day and at the start of the afternoon session. This register will record whether pupils are:

- Present.
- Absent.
- Attending an approved educational or sporting visit.
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

The school will use the national attendance codes to ensure attendance and absence are monitored and recorded in a consistent way. The following codes will be used:

- / = Present in the morning
- \ = Present in the afternoon
- L = Late arrival before the register has closed
- C = Authorised absence
- E = Excluded but no alternative provision made
- H = Authorised holiday
- I = Illness
- M = Medical or dental appointments
- R = Religious observance
- B = Off-site education activity
- G = Unauthorised holiday
- O = Unauthorised absence
- U = Arrived after registration closed
- N = Reason not yet provided
- X = Not required to be in school
- T = Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence
- V = Educational visit or trip
- P = Participating in a supervised sporting activity
- D = Dual registered – at another educational establishment
- Y = Exceptional circumstances
- Z = Pupil not on admission register

When the school has planned in advance to be fully or partially closed, the code '#' will be used for the relevant pupils who are absent. This code will also be used to record year groups who are not due to attend because the school has set different term dates for different years, e.g. induction days.

All amendments made to the attendance register will include the original entry, the amended entry, the reason for the amendment, the date of amendment and the name and role of the person who made the amendment.

Every entry received into the attendance register will be preserved for three years.

## **10. School Business Manager**

If they are persistently absent, pupils will be referred to the School Business Manager who will attempt to resolve the situation through a parent agreement. If the situation cannot be resolved and attendance does not improve, the school will seek advice from the LA's Education Welfare Service who have the power to issue sanctions such as prosecutions or penalty notices to parents.

The School Business Manager will monitor and analyse attendance data regularly to ensure that intervention is delivered quickly to address absence, and will provide regular reports to the Head Teacher to enable them to track the attendance of pupils and to implement attendance procedures where necessary.

## **11. Lateness**

The school regards punctuality as being of the utmost importance.

Doors open at 8.40am. The school day starts at 8.45am and pupils should be in their classroom at this time. Registers are taken as follows throughout the school day:

- Doors close at 8.45am and registers are taken. Pupils arriving after the doors have been closed should enter via the school office.
- Pupils arriving via the school office but before 9.00am will be marked as arriving late in the registers.
- The register closes at 9.00am.
- After lunch, registers are taken at 1.00pm.
- The register closes at 1:10pm. Pupils will receive a mark of absence if they are not present.
- Pupils attending after registers have closed will receive a mark to show that they were on site, but this will count as a late mark (unauthorised absence) unless deemed to be an exceptional circumstance and authorised accordingly by the Head Teacher.

## **12. Term-time leave**

The school will require parents to observe the school holidays as prescribed; therefore, the Head Teacher will be unable to authorise holidays during term-time in most cases. The Head Teacher will be only allowed to grant a leave of absence in exceptional circumstances. Applications are to be made in advance and the Head Teacher will need to be satisfied by the evidence which is presented, before authorising term-time leave. The Head Teacher will take into account the most up to date LA guidance before authorising any term-time absence.

The Head Teacher will determine the amount of time a pupil can be away from school during term-time as authorised leave. Any requests for leave during term-time will be considered on an individual basis and the pupil's previous attendance record will be taken into account. Any leave of absence is at the discretion of the Head Teacher.

Requests for leave will not be granted in the following circumstances:

- Immediately before and during statutory assessment periods
- Where a pupil's authorised absence record is already above 10 percent for any reason

The school will follow LA procedures in respect of reporting unauthorised term-time absences. As such, if parents take their child out of school during term-time without authorisation from the Head Teacher, they may be subject to sanctions such as penalty fines.

## **13. Leave during lunch times**

Parents may be permitted to take their child away from the school premises during lunch times with permission from the Head Teacher – it is at the Head Teacher's discretion as to whether a pupil will be allowed to leave the premises.

Parents will submit a written request to the Head Teacher outlining the reasons for their child to leave the premises during lunch time. The Head Teacher will consider the request and, if necessary, will invite the parent into the school for a discussion regarding any concerns. The Head Teacher reserves the right to grant or refuse a request and will inform the parent accordingly no later than one week after the request is made.

Our lunch time hours are 12:00pm - 1:00pm. Where lunchtime absence requests are granted, pupils are to leave the school premises within 10 minutes of the start of lunch and return no later than 5 minutes before the end of lunch.

Parents will be required to meet their child at the school office when taking them off the premises – the pupil will be signed out and back in using the Signing In/Out (Pupils) book located in the school office. A member of staff will be available at the school office before the pupil leaves the premises and upon their return to sign them back in. No pupil will leave the premises before the member of staff has given their permission.

If a pupil expected to leave no longer has reason to do so, e.g. a medical appointment is cancelled, parents will inform the school office staff immediately.

The Head Teacher reserves the right to withdraw their permission at any time – this may occur, for example, where there are attendance concerns. Any decision to withdraw permission will be in writing, explaining the reasons for the Head Teacher's decision. If permission is withdrawn, parents will not be entitled to appeal the decision. Parents will be able to withdraw their request at any time – the request will be submitted in writing to the Head Teacher.

## **14. Truancy**

Truancy will be considered as any absence of part, or all, of one or more days from school, during which the school has not been notified of the cause behind such absence.

All staff will be actively engaged in supporting the regular attendance of pupils, and understand the importance of continuity in each pupil's learning.

All pupils are expected to be in their classes by 8.45am and 1:00pm, where the teacher will record the attendance in the attendance register. Any pupil with permission to leave the school during the day must sign out at the school office and sign back in again on their return.

Immediate action will be taken when there are any concerns that a pupil might be truanting. If truancy is suspected, the Head Teacher is notified, and they will contact the parent in order to assess the reasons behind the pupil not attending school.

The following procedures will be taken in the event of a truancy:

- In the first instance, a letter of warning will be sent to the parents of the pupil, informing them of the truancy and stating that any future occurrences could result in further action being taken.
- If any further truancy occurs, then the school will consider issuing a penalty notice.
- A penalty notice will be issued where there is overt truancy, inappropriate parentally-condoned absence, excessive holidays in term-time and persistent late arrival at school.

The DSL will be involved where an instance of truancy may be linked to a safeguarding concern. Any safeguarding concerns will be dealt with in line with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

## **15. Missing children**

Pupils will not be permitted to leave the school premises during the school day unless they have permission from the school. The following procedures will be taken in the event of a pupil going missing whilst at school:

- The member of staff who has noticed the missing pupil will inform the School Business Manager and/or Head Teacher immediately.
- Office staff will also be informed as they will act as a point of contact for receiving information regarding the search.
- A member of staff will stay with the rest of the class, and all other available members of staff will conduct a thorough search of the school premises as directed by the Head Teacher.
- The following areas will be systematically searched:
  - All classrooms
  - All toilets
  - The library
  - The ICT Suite
  - The school grounds
- Available staff will begin a search of the area immediately outside of the school premises, and will take a mobile phone with them so they can be contacted.
- If the pupil has not been found after 10 minutes, then the parents of the pupil will be notified.
- The school will attempt to contact parents using the emergency contact numbers provided.
- If the parents have had no contact from the pupil, and the emergency contacts list has been exhausted, the police will be contacted.
- The missing pupil's teacher will fill in an incident form, describing all circumstances leading up to the pupil going missing.
- If the missing pupil has an allocated social worker, is a looked-after child, or has any SEND, then the appropriate personnel will be informed.
- When the pupil has been located, members of staff will care for and talk to the pupil to ensure they are safe and well.
- Parents and any other agencies will be informed immediately when the pupil has been located.

The Head Teacher will take the appropriate action to ensure that pupils understand they must not leave the premises, and sanctions will be issued if deemed necessary. Appropriate disciplinary procedures will be followed in accordance with the school's Behaviour Policy.

The Head Teacher will carry out a full investigation and will draw a conclusion as to how the incident occurred. A written report will be produced, and policies and procedures will be reviewed in accordance with the outcome where necessary.

## **16. Religious observances**

The school will take advice from local religious leaders of all faiths to establish the appropriate number of days of absence required for religious festivals. Parents will be required to inform the school in advance if absences are required for days of religious observance.

## **17. Appointments**

As far as possible, parents will be encouraged to book medical and dental appointments outside of school hours.

If the appointment requires the pupil to leave during the school day, they will be signed out/in at the school office by a parent. Pupils will be expected to attend school before and after the appointment wherever possible.

Where a pupil's attendance level falls below 90% parents may be asked to provide the school with confirmatory evidence of the medical appointment.

## **18. Modelling and acting performances/activities**

The school will ensure that all pupils engaging in performances/activities (whether they, or another person, receives payment or not), which require them to be absent from school, understand that they will be required to obtain a licence from the LA which authorises the school's absence(s).

Where a licence has been granted by the LA and it specifies dates of absence, no further authorisation will be needed from the school. Where an application does not specify dates, and it has been approved by the LA, it is at the discretion of the Head Teacher to authorise the leave of absence for each day. The Head Teacher will not authorise any absences which would mean that a pupil's attendance would fall below 96 percent unless there are exceptional circumstances or further guidance from the LA has been sought. Where a licence has not been obtained, the Head Teacher will not authorise any absence for a performance or activity.

## **19. Young carers**

The school understands the difficulties that face young carers, and will endeavour to identify young carers at the earliest opportunity, as well as through their time at the school. A caring and flexible approach will be taken to the needs of young carers and each pupil will be examined on a case-by-case basis, involving other agencies if appropriate.

The school, in conjunction with relevant authorities, will implement support for pupils who are young carers, to encourage their sustained and regular attendance at school in line with the school's expectations.

## **20. Monitoring and review**

Attendance and punctuality will be monitored throughout the year and is included as a standing agenda item for both SLT and Governing Body meetings. The school's attendance target is 96 percent.

This policy will be reviewed and updated to include the current year's attendance target figure annually by the Head Teacher. The next scheduled review date for this policy is September 2023.

Any changes made to this policy will be communicated to all relevant stakeholders.

## Attendance Monitoring Procedures

Urchfont Primary School has adopted the following attendance monitoring procedures, to ensure that pupils' attendance meets the expected standard, and effective intervention is provided where pupils' attendance falls below the standard:

1. Termly reports are reviewed and discussed during SLT meetings detailing annual attendance to date.
2. Absence reports are reviewed and discussed during SLT meetings as soon as any associated absence thresholds have been or are at risk of being reached.
3. Any attendance/punctuality trends noticed by classroom teachers are passed immediately to the SLT.
4. Contact is made with parents on the first day of absence for any pupil absence not reported.
5. Contact is made to the parents of any pupils marked using the N code. Any N codes not established after a week are recorded as an unauthorised absence.
6. Where absence thresholds are met due to
7. If a pupil's attendance falls to 96 percent, the School Business Manager or Head Teacher speaks to the relevant parents/guardians to discuss any issues or problems to ascertain how the school can help to improve their attendance if necessary.
8. If a pupil's attendance falls below 90 percent, a letter is sent home explaining that the pupil's attendance is now being monitored, and the School Business Manager contacts the parents to discuss this.
9. The pupil's attendance is monitored and, if attendance does not improve, parents are required to attend a meeting in school with the Head Teacher and set targets for their child. If parents are unwilling to cooperate, or are genuinely unable to attend, a referral may be required to the local education welfare officer (EWO), who will then conduct a home visit.
10. If attendance targets are not met, the School Business Manager makes a referral to the EWO. Education welfare protocol is followed, and a parental contract is drawn up. An agreed monitoring period is established and, if there are no improvements, a final written warning is issued to the parents. If there is no improvement after an additional four weeks the EWO will be informed and a fixed-penalty notice issued.