



# Chiltern Way Academy Trust

Turning Futures Around

## **Attendance for Learning Policy**

**Responsibility for this policy (job title): Academy SWAM**

**Responsibility for its review: Curriculum and Wellbeing Committee**

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## **Introduction:**

### What are our expectations?

At Chiltern Way Academy Trust we expect all students to have good school attendance. Good attendance is when students attend school regularly and arrive punctually.

### Why is it important to us?

Punctuality and regular school attendance are essential if children are to be safe, happy and successful; ensuring they achieve their full potential.

Regular and punctual attendance ensures children are more ready to start their day.

Regular and punctual school attendance is also a protective factor and the best opportunity for needs to be identified and support provided.

The association between regular absences and a number of extra-familial harms is recognised and understood.

At Chiltern Way Academy Trust we believe regular and punctual school attendance is the key to enabling children to maximise the educational opportunities available to them. Through these opportunities they can learn how to become emotionally resilient, confident and competent adults who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community.

At Chiltern Way Academy Trust we value all students. We understand that some students find it harder than others to attend school. As set out in this policy, we will work with children and their families to identify the reasons for poor attendance and will support them to try to resolve any difficulties and barriers.

## **Attendance legislation.**

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that parents / carers must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs the child may have. This can be regular attendance at school or by education otherwise.

Where parents have decided to register their child at Chiltern Way Academy Trust, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances.

If a child of compulsory school age is registered at a school and fails to attend regularly at the school, then the parent / carer is guilty of an offence under Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996.

Regular attendance at school is a prerequisite for appropriate student achievement. Absence, whether it is long term, frequent or occasional, leads to missed experiences and may cause fractured social relationships which encourage an increased pattern of non-attendance.

As an educationally inclusive school we constantly monitor and evaluate the progress each of our students makes. The school seeks to identify any students who may be missing out due to attendance or punctuality problems.

The school staff are keen to work in partnership with students, parents/carers and outside agencies to support all families and ensure students can make progress with their education and life beyond school.

**Aims:**

- To emphasise the importance of and secure from students, maximum attendance at school to enable them to take full advantage of their educational opportunities.
- To make explicit to all relevant parties the school's expectations over attendance levels.
- To promote a consistent approach across the school to all matters relating to attendance.
- To clarify roles and responsibilities of all parties in respect to attendance.
- To communicate to all relevant parties (staff, parents/carers and students) the legal position with respect to attendance and the categories of absence which are deemed 'authorised'.
- To stress the need for home and school to work in close partnership to achieve high attendance.
- To ensure there is close partnership working with the Local Authority and external agencies and professionals where attendance is considered to be a growing concern, persistent or severe.

Regular attendance at school is vital. Without it the learning process becomes fragmented and unsatisfactory; put simply, absence means missed learning. It is also a legal requirement that students of a compulsory school age receive full time education and this, with the exception of those educated at home or elsewhere, means regular attendance at school.

Irregular attendance leads to students missing important lessons and therefore not fulfilling their true potential; it also places children at risk and may result in their being drawn into patterns of anti-social or criminal behaviour. Therefore, we take the issues of attendance very seriously and do all we can to obtain very high attendance from all our students.

Attendance is a national priority and a key indicator of an effective school. As such, it is scrutinised by Ofsted. We submit data to the Local Authority (LA) every term and to the Department of Education (DfE) three times a year through the CENSUS.

National data clearly shows a positive correlation between high attendance and high examination performance.

**What is an acceptable attendance rate?**

The School Attendance Guidance 2022, from the Department for Education (DfE) considers persistent absences to be when a child misses 10% of school. This is equivalent to missing 1 day or more a fortnight across a full school year. Severe absence is when a child misses 50% or more of school.

The vast majority of our students achieve over 95% attendance, and this is what we expect from all our students as a minimum.

Sickness comes usually as a block of time over a continuous period; what we look for are unbroken weeks (i.e. those where the student is marked present on all ten sessions); students should NOT have more than

one or two broken weeks in the course of an academic year. Regular broken weeks are a cause for concern and will be followed up by the school.

### **Authorised Absences:**

The DfE has issued guidelines to all schools detailing valid reasons for authorised or justified absences:

- When a child is ill or receiving medical attention
- Days of religious observance notified in advance
- Absence due to family circumstances (e.g. bereavement, serious illness).
- Study leave, granted to Year 11 students during public examinations
- Traveller absence when the parent / carer is travelling for occupational purposes and the school has granted a leave of absence following a request from the parent / carer

There are other absences, such as 'Approved sporting activity' that can be authorised and there will be events affecting families, some unforeseen, which will necessitate absence from school and professional discretion will need to be used in these cases about whether the absence can be authorised.

We expect absence to be kept to a minimum and that all routine medical and dental appointments will be arranged outside of school hours wherever possible.

Authorising absence is ultimately a decision made by the Head Teacher.

### **Religious Observance:**

Chiltern Way Academy Trust acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods or weekends. This necessitates a consideration of authorised absence or special leave for religious observance. (Code R)

It is reasonable for a parent / carer to allow their children not to attend school on any day of religious observance if recognised by the parent's / carer's religious body. As a general rule, we would interpret 'a day exclusively set apart for religious observance' as a day when the student's parents would be expected by the religious body to which they belong, to stay away from their employment in order to mark the occasion.

Parents / carers are requested to give advance notice to the school if they intend their child to be absent. If the religious body sets apart a single day for a religious observance and the parent / carer applies for more than one day, the school may only record one day as authorised on this basis.

### **Unauthorised Absences:**

- No letter or acceptable explanation is provided by parents/carers
- The reason for absence does not fall into one of the categories of authorised absence above

- Where school has not granted a leave of absence for the purpose of a holiday, but the parents / carers still take the child out of school, or the child is kept away longer than the period of leave granted

The following activities would be classified as unauthorised:

- Minding the house
- Caring for relatives
- Awaiting repair people
- Shopping
- A birthday or family celebration

### **Leave of Absence.**

DfE guidelines were revised in 2006 when research showed clear evidence between attendance levels and progress. Schools are not able to automatically authorise any absence during term time for holidays.

We ask parents / carers to notify the school in advance of any proposed special occasion to ascertain whether the school would view the reason for absence as valid or not. Individual cases will need to be judged on their merits.

We strongly discourage holidays being taken in term time as learning is disrupted and lost time is detrimental to the educational progress of the child. The DfE guidance makes it clear that each case will be considered on its merits and approval is not automatic.

Parents/carers who feel it is absolutely unavoidable to take their annual holiday during term time must write to the Head of Campus requesting a leave of absence, clearly explaining the circumstances at least four weeks in advance – prior to any booking. The school will not authorise holidays retrospectively.

The DfE guidelines make it plain that it is the school that judges whether an absence is authorised or not. A note from home therefore does not automatically make an absence valid/justified/authorised.

As a school we will only authorise leave of absence in extenuating circumstances.

### **Home / School Partnership**

Securing a high level of attendance requires the school and home to work closely together. In order to achieve this, it is essential that;

#### Parents / Carers

- Encourage their children to attend school on a regular basis
- Ensure their child arrives at school on time for morning and afternoon registration. Parents / carers can be prosecuted if their child is persistently late-  
See Appendix A for registration times at each of our campuses.

We will monitor persistent late comers and action will be taken.

- Notify the school as soon as possible on the first day of absence, if their child is ill. Absences must be reported via our 24 hour answer machine service including an estimation of the likely length of absence.

Bierton Hill Campus	01296 622 157
Prestwood Campus	01296 622 157
Wendover Campus	01296 622 157
Wokingham	01296 622 157

- Contact the school at an early stage about any concerns they have about their child's attitude and attendance to school.
- Seek to make routine appointments outside of school hours
- Provide medical documentation for illness, when necessary

#### School will:

- Welcome children as they arrive to school each day
- Contact home on the first day of all absences if no message has been received from home using our automated response system. This is part of our safeguarding process.
- Contact home over any absences about which we are doubtful. This is part of our safeguarding process.
- Contact home to discuss ad hoc absences and absences that form patterns. This is part of our safeguarding process.
- Follow up promptly any concerns that parents / carers pass on to us that may be affecting their child's attitude to or feeling of wellbeing in school.
- Action any concerns in a timely manner.
- Regularly and consistently remind students of the importance of good attendance and punctuality.
- Promote and celebrate good attendance and punctuality and provide incentives and rewards, where and as appropriate.
- Communicate student attendance and absence home to parents / carers on a regular basis.
- Offer school support services, as appropriate, to support children with their school attendance.
- Instigate welfare checks and home-visits, in line with the safeguarding procedures, where appropriate.
- Work with families to engage further support from appropriate external agencies, as necessary.
- Work collaboratively and in partnership with external agencies as required – this may include updating social workers of any absences.

#### **Support Systems within School**

At Chiltern Way Academy Trust we recognise that poor attendance is often an indication of difficulties in a child's life. This may be related to problems and/or difficulties at school, at home or within the community. Parents / carers should make school aware of any difficulties or changes in circumstances

that may affect their child's attendance and/or behaviour in school, for example, bereavement, divorce / separation. This will help the school identify any additional support that may be required.

We also recognise that some students are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance, for example, those students with special educational needs, those with physical or mental health needs, migrant and refugee students and looked after children.

The school will implement a range of strategies to support improved attendance. Strategies used will include:

- Discussions and meetings with parents / carers and students
- Referrals to support agencies
- Reward systems, where appropriate
- Time limited part time time-tables, where appropriate
- Additional learning support
- Behaviour support
- Pastoral support
- Inclusion units
- Reintegration support packages

Support offered to families will be child centred and planned in discussion and agreement with both parents / carers and students.

Every school within the Chiltern Way Academy Trust has an Attendance Manager who is a member of the school's leadership team and is also responsible for student welfare and safeguarding. The Campus Safeguarding, Welfare & Attendance Manager (SWAM) monitors attendance and punctuality on a daily basis after morning registration has closed. Monitoring attendance is ongoing, and families will be contacted to discuss any irregularities, concerns etc.

The Campus SWAM works closely with children and their families. If any parent / carer or student is experiencing difficulties with achieving regular attendance or punctuality, please do not hesitate to contact the Campus SWAM. Chiltern Way Academy Trust have an Academy Lead SWAM who may also be contacted when necessary.

Please see Appendix B for a list of all Attendance Managers and their contact details.

### **Legal Sanctions**

Where school-based intervention fails to bring about an improvement in attendance, Chiltern Way Academy Trust will notify the local Education Welfare Service of the irregular attendance.

The school may invite parents / carers to attend a Parenting Contract Meeting and issue a formal warning of a Penalty Notice.



### Parenting Contracts

(Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003) A Parenting Contract is a formal written agreement between the school and the parent / carer. It can also be extended to include the child and any other agencies offering support to resolve any difficulties leading to improved attendance.

The contract will outline attendance targets and will detail agreed actions that will help to achieve the target. The contract will be reviewed regularly.

The contract is not a punitive tool. It is intended to provide support and offer an alternative to prosecution. They can, however, be used as evidence in a prosecution should irregular attendance continue.

### Fixed Penalty Notices

(Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003) Fixed Penalty Notices can be served on parents as an alternative to prosecution where they have failed to ensure their child of compulsory school age regularly attends school. Fixed Penalty Notices will be considered when:

- Intervention has failed to bring about improvement and further unauthorised absence has occurred following written warning to improve.
- A student has taken leave of absence i.e. for the purpose of a holiday in term time and the absence has not been authorised by the school

The penalty is £60, per parent/carer, per child if paid within 21 days, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days of the date the Notice was issued.

If the penalty is not paid by the end of the 28 day period, the local authority may decide to prosecute for the original offence to which the notice applies under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

### Attendance Prosecution

If a child of compulsory school age fails to attend school regularly, their parents may be guilty of an offence and can be prosecuted by the local authority. Prosecution in the Magistrates Court is the last resort where all other voluntary and formal support has failed.

The school will provide the Local Authority with evidence required for a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996. This is to ensure that parents / carers realise their own responsibilities in ensuring attendance at school and most importantly about returning children to education.

## APPENDICES

### Appendix A – Registration times:

<b>Campus</b>	<b>Morning Registration</b>	<b>Afternoon Registration</b>
Bierton	9am -9.30am	1.15pm – 1.45pm
Garden View	9am -9.30am	Mon – Thurs 12.00pm – 12.30pm Fri 12.30pm – 1pm
Prestwood	9am -9.30am	Mon – Thurs 1.15pm – 1.45pm Fri 12.00pm – 12.30pm
Wendover	9am -9.30am	Mon – Thurs 12.00pm – 12.30pm Fri 12.30pm – 1pm
Wokingham	9am -9.30am	Mon – Thurs 12pm – 12.30pm Fri 11.30am -12pm

### Appendix B – Attendance Managers

<b>Campus</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Contact</b>
Academy Lead	Emma Bryan (Academy Lead Safeguarding, Welfare & Attendance Manager)	07554 415 507 <a href="mailto:ebryan@chilternway.org">ebryan@chilternway.org</a>
Bierton Campus	Jo Dolder (Campus Safeguarding, Welfare & Attendance Manager)	07508 403 833 <a href="mailto:jdolder@chilternway.org">jdolder@chilternway.org</a>
Garden View	Thomas Stibbs (Campus Safeguarding, Welfare & Attendance Manager)	07508 403 880 <a href="mailto:tstibbs@chilternway.org">tstibbs@chilternway.org</a>
Prestwood Campus	Emma Bryan (Campus Safeguarding, Welfare & Attendance Manager)	07554 415 507 <a href="mailto:ebryan@chilternway.org">ebryan@chilternway.org</a>
Wendover Campus	Thomas Stibbs (Campus Safeguarding, Welfare & Attendance Manager)	07508 403 880 <a href="mailto:tstibbs@chilternway.org">tstibbs@chilternway.org</a>
Wokingham Campus	Emma Bryan (Campus Safeguarding, Welfare & Attendance Manager)	07554 415 507 <a href="mailto:ebryan@chilternway.org">ebryan@chilternway.org</a>