

## **CIS Attendance policy**

### **Statutory Requirements:**

It is not statutory for schools to have an attendance policy. It is statutory to have a home school agreement as set down in Section 110 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998. Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on governing bodies to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and students under the age of 18.

### **Department for Education guidance School attendance (2014) 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. All pupils must be punctual to their lessons.

## **Attendance Policy**

### **Review dates**

- The policy should be reviewed annually.
- Regular reviews provide an opportunity to revise objectives and how they are delivered to reflect developments that have taken place.

School attendance is subject to various education laws and this school attendance policy is written to reflect these laws and the guidance produced by the Department for Education and Cheshire West and Chester County Council.

This attendance policy is also consistent with the following school policies:

- Admissions
- Anti-bullying
- Child protection
- Exclusion
- Safeguarding
- Special educational needs
- Teaching and learning
- Behaviour and rewards.

The level of attendance and punctuality expected from all our pupils is included in our school's Home School Agreement, which parents must sign following their child's admission to a school (statutory).

It is very important, therefore, that you make sure your child attends regularly and this policy sets out how together we will achieve this. This policy will be annually publicised in writing for all staff, parents and pupils via <http://www.christletoninternationalstudio.co.uk>.

For the impact of the policy to be maximised, the Assistant Principal will take overall responsibility for co-ordinating, implementing and monitoring the policy.

### **Expectation**

For a child to reach their full educational achievement a high level of school attendance is essential.

We are committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all our pupils/students and endeavour to provide an environment where all pupils feel valued and welcome. Parents and pupils play a part in making our school so successful. Every child has a right to access the education to which he/she is entitled. Parents and teachers share the responsibility for supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and punctuality for all.

It is our duty to consistently strive to achieve 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.

For our children to take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered it is vital your child is at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. The routines children develop around attendance and punctuality at school are the same as the expectations of any future employer in the world of work. High attainment, confidence with peers and staff, and future aspirations depend on good attendance.

Research has shown that good attendance is important because:

- 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 cope with.
- Regular attenders find learning more satisfying.
- Regular attenders are more successful in transferring between primary school, secondary school, and higher education, employment or training.

### **Promoting good attendance**

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents and the child. The Home School Agreement will contain details of how we will work with parents and our expectations of what parents will need to do to ensure their child achieves good attendance.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Every half term, report to you on how your child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainments.
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying group and individual achievements.
- Reward good or improving attendance through class competitions and spot prizes.
- Set targets for the school and for classes for attendance and display these in the school.

### **Responsibilities of staff:**

- Ensure that all students are registered accurately.
- Promote and reward good attendance with students at all appropriate opportunities.
- Liaise with the attendance leader on matters of attendance and punctuality.
- Communicate any concerns or underlying problems that may account for a child's absence.
- Support pupils with absence to engage with their learning once they are back in school.

### **Responsibilities of students:**

- Attend every day unless they are ill or have an authorised absence.
- Arrive in school on time.
- Take responsibility for registering at the reception desk during AM and PM registration time.

### **Responsibilities of parents/carers**

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is a parent/carer's legal responsibility (Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act) and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law.

Parents will:

- Inform the school on the first day of absence
- Discuss with the tutor/class teacher any planned absences well in advance
- Support the school with their child in aiming for 100% attendance each year
- Make sure that any absence is clearly accounted for by telephone or text on the first and subsequent days of absence, or by letter if a phone is unavailable
- Avoid taking their child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments
- Only request leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance.

### **Recording Attendance**

Legally the register must be marked twice daily. This is once at the start of the school day, 8.30am, and again for the afternoon session at 12:45pm.

### **Lateness and Punctuality**

It is important to be on time at the start of the morning and afternoon school sessions and to lessons. The start of school/lessons is used to give out instructions or organise work. If your child is late they can miss work time with their class teacher getting vital information, cause disruption to the lesson for others, and it can be embarrassing leading to possible further absence.

- The school day begins at 08:30 and all pupils are expected to be in school at this time. Morning registration is at 08:15 and it closes at 08:30.
- All lateness is recorded daily. This information will be required by the courts, should a prosecution for non-attendance or lateness be necessary.

- Arrival after the close of registration will be marked as unauthorised absence and coded N in line with Cheshire West and Chester and the Department of Education guidance. This mark shows them to be on site, but is legally recorded as an absence.
- If a pupil is late due to a medical appointment, they will receive an authorised absence, coded M. Please be advised that, where possible, doctors and dentists appointments are to be made outside of school hours or during school holidays.

Pupils who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of the other pupils. Ongoing and repeated lateness is considered as unauthorised absence and will be subject to legal action.

Parents, guardians or carers of pupils who have patterns of lateness will be contacted to discuss the importance of good time keeping and how this might be achieved. If lateness persists parents, guardians or carers will be invited to attend the school and discuss the problem and support offered. If support is not appropriate or is declined and a child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence due to lateness recorded in any 10 week period, the school or Hampshire County Council will be required to issue parents with a Penalty Notice in accordance with Hampshire County Council's Code of conduct: issuing Penalty Notices for unauthorised absence from schools.

A child not attending school is considered a safeguarding matter. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required. If your child is absent you must:

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence
- If the student is being monitored for attendance a medical note/letter must be provided.

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone or text you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you – this is because we have a duty to ensure your child's safety as well as their regular school attendance
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with our Assistant Principal.

If absences persist:

- Refer the matter to the Educational Welfare Officer if attendance is below 85%.

### **Five days' absence**

If a student is absent for more than 5 days then parental authority is no longer adequate evidence for the absence. Any subsequent absences after the first five days need to be authorised by a doctor's note. If a doctor's note is not produced then these absences will be marked as unauthorised. At this point, a letter will be sent home.

### **Ten days' absence**

We have a legal duty to report the absence of any pupil who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days. If the child is not seen and contact has not been established with the named parent/carer then the local authority is notified that the child is at risk of missing. Children's Services staff will visit the last known address and alert key services to locate the child. So help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up-to-date contact number. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

## **Continued or ongoing absence**

If your child misses 10% (three weeks/sessions) or more schooling across the school year, for whatever reason, they are defined as persistent absentees. Absence for whatever reason disadvantages a child by creating gaps in his or her learning. Research shows these gaps affect attainment when attendance falls below 95%. As such, we monitor all absence thoroughly and all attendance data is shared with the local authority and the Department for Education. If your child has had absence and their attendance level is falling towards 85% we will contact you and, depending on the reasons for the absence, will invite you in discuss the reasons for absence and create an action plan for the medium term to help improve attendance. If no agreement can be created, then student will be referred to the Educational Welfare Officer. Please see Attendance flowchart on our website.

## **Request for leave of absence**

Amendments to school attendance regulations were updated and enforced from September 2013: Regulations state that the Principal may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. It is important to note that the Principal can determine the length of the authorised absence, as well as whether absence is authorised at all. The fundamental principles for defining exceptional are rare, significant, or unavoidable, which means the event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. There are no rules on this as circumstances vary from school to school and family to family. There is, however, no legal entitlement for time off in school term time to go on holiday and in the majority of cases holiday will not be authorised. Parents/carers wishing to apply for leave of absence need to contact the Principal directly.

If term-time leave is taken without prior permission from the school, the absence will be unauthorised and if the number of sessions absent hits the thresholds set down in Hampshire County Council's Code of conduct, parents/carers will be issued with a fixed-penalty fine or other legal action in accordance with the code

Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children out during school time.

## **Understanding 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 the absence or given approval in advance for such an absence. If no explanation is received, absences cannot be authorised
- **Unauthorised absence:** is when the school has not received a reason for absence or has not approved a child's leave absence from school after a parent's request. This includes:
  - Parents giving their children permission to be off school unnecessarily, such as for shopping, birthdays, to look after siblings
  - Truancy before or during the school day
  - Absences which have not been explained.

A school can, if needed, change an authorised absence to an unauthorised absence and vice versa if new information is presented. Any changes will be communicated to parents/carers. An example of this would be where a parent states a child is unwell but on return to school there is evidence they have been on holiday.

### **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 when there is unauthorised absence and :

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 and parents are complicit in the child's absence.

The following legal measures will be used 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 Cheshire West and Chester County Council's Code of conduct: issuing Penalty Notices for unauthorised absence from schools 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.

The Code of conduct states that schools or Cheshire West and Chester County Council 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 with other intervention strategies in place or other sanctions already being processed.

If a child's unauthorised absence meets any of the above criteria and the family or child do not require any agency support to improve the attendance then a Penalty Notice is issued for either:

1. 10 sessions of unauthorised absence or lateness in any 10 week school period
2. One or more sessions of unauthorised absence during a public exam, formal school assessment or testing where dates are published in advance. This includes where a pupil has unauthorised absence due to either:
  - Non-approval of a parent/carer's request for leave of absence, or
  - A holiday that has been taken without permission.

Parents and carers will be warned of the likelihood of a Penalty Notice being issued for unauthorised absence via a letter, through the leave of absence request form, or through the school's attendance policy and website. The Penalty Notice is a fine that is 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 of unauthorised absence the school or Cheshire West and Chester County Council will decide whether a Penalty Notice is issued to one or more parents/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.

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 Hampshire County Council will consider prosecution for the non-attendance. Payment methods are detailed on the Penalty Notices themselves. Penalties are to be paid to Hampshire County Council and revenue resulting from payment of penalties is used by the County Council to help cover the costs of issuing Penalty Notices and/or the cost of prosecuting recipients who do not pay.

Please note: If you pay the Penalty Notice and your child has further unauthorised absences additional legal action will be taken. For example, in the event that a Penalty Notice has previously been served to you due to unauthorised holiday, should your child have any future unauthorised leave this will result in further legal action for you, such as prosecution or an Education Supervision Order. For further information parents/carers can request a leaflet from their school and should visit Cheshire West and Chester County Council's website.

### **School Refusing**

Children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents/carers and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse.

Contact school immediately and openly discuss your worries. Your child could be avoiding school for a number of reasons – difficulties with school work, bullying, friendship problems, family difficulties. It is important that we identify the reason for your child's reluctance to attend school and work together to tackle the problem. In some cases you may find it helpful to discuss the circumstances of your child's difficulties with another professional.



## **Study leave**

We believe that pupils/students' needs are best met if they attend school every day in the period leading up to examinations. No study leave will be granted during this period, therefore, and pupils/students will be expected to attend school in the usual way. (Insert details of in-school revision arrangements and other activities.) Study leave will only be granted to Year 11 pupils/students during the time of the GCSE examination period. Should any pupils/students wish to attend school (or should their parents wish them to) on the days and at times when they are not sitting examinations, arrangements will be made for them to do so. The school will work within the legal requirements, ie:

- Study leave should only be granted to Year 11 pupils and never to those in other year groups
- It should never exceed 15 school days in a year and is most appropriately granted during the examination period itself, ie not before the beginning of that period
- It should always be granted sparingly, taking account of an individual pupil/student's ability to manage and benefit from unsupervised study
- Any pupil has the right to attend school during study leave and a parent has the right to insist he/she does so
- Any session given to pupils as study leave has a statistical meaning of authorised absence (it is not an approved educational activity as it is unsupervised) and should be recorded and reported on by the school as such.

## **Record preservation**

School registers are legal documents. We will ensure compliance with attendance regulations by keeping attendance records for at least three years. Computer registers will be preserved as electronic back-ups or microfiche copies (if schools are not SIMS centrally hosted and do not have secure electronic server back-up they must print hard copies of the official registers and bind into annual volumes).