

# Clipston Endowed VC Primary School

## Attendance and Punctuality Policy



**Be Kind ~ Be Your Best ~ Be Happy**

Adopted by the Governing Body – January 2023  
Due for Review – Spring 2024

Signed .....  
Mrs Helen Bellamy – Chair of Governors

## **Clipston Primary School's Mission, Ethos and Aims**

### **Our Mission**

Be Kind ~ Be Your Best ~ Be Happy

### **Ethos**

Recognising its historic foundation, Clipston Primary School seeks to serve its community by providing a rounded, connected and coherent education of the highest quality.

We endeavour to preserve and develop our distinct religious character in accordance with the principles of the Church of England.

The school lives out its Christian virtues – Thankfulness, Kindness, Justice, Love, Forgiveness, Responsibility and Courage – and all those essential human values, which are common to good, kind and tolerant people of all faiths and none, through the experiences it offers to all its pupils.

### **Aims**

The school's aim, through its Christian ethos, is the creation of a safe, happy learning environment, which supports all children on their journey towards becoming:

- Successful engaged learners, who enjoy learning, who are knowledgeable and skilled, and who make progress and achieve their best;
- Confident, articulate individuals who can lead safe, healthy and fulfilling lives in the communities in which they live now and in the future;
- Responsible, happy citizens of the world who have the capacity to make positive contributions to society.

**“Do to others as you would have them do unto you” Luke 6:31**

To achieve these aims, staff and governors will work in partnership with parents, carers and the local community for the benefit of all our pupils.

## **Attendance and Punctuality Policy**

### **Statement of Intent**

- Our school aims to maximise the attendance of our children.
- Our school aims to provide an environment that encourages regular attendance and punctuality.
- Our school aims to achieve excellent levels of attendance and punctuality to enable all pupils to take advantage of the educational opportunities available to them.
- Our school recognises that a good school attendance is essential for pupils to maximise their achievement and attainment at school.
- Our school will endeavour to offer support where pupils experience attendance difficulties.

### **Roles and responsibilities**

#### **Pupils**

All pupils are expected to attend school and all their lessons regularly and punctually. All pupils are expected to strive to achieve an attendance target of at least 96%, and to aim for 100%.

## Parents/carers

Parents are responsible for ensuring their child attends school regularly and punctually. Parents should inform the school by phone or email each day that their child is absent, by 9.15am. Parents should avoid making medical/dental appointments during school hours wherever possible and holidays should not be taken in term time. Where holidays in term time are unavoidable, requests for leave of absence should be made using the appropriate form, available from the office or school website.

### What to do if your child is absent

Parents/carers must contact the school by 9.15am **on each day of absence**.

If your child is absent because they have diarrhoea and/or vomiting, parents are not required to ring the school on day two of the absence. **Children with sickness and diarrhoea must remain absent from school for 48 hours after the last bout of vomiting or diarrhoea, in accordance with NHS Advice and to minimise the spread of the illness throughout the school.**

If your child is absent because of an infection or illness that will require several days of absence (e.g. chicken pox), parents are not required to ring the school on day two, three, four and five of the absence **if these days all fall in the same working week.**

Parent messages will be noted on the message pad by office staff and the class teacher informed.

## School staff

School staff will endeavour to achieve good attendance and punctuality through personal example. Good attendance and the monitoring of attendance is the responsibility of all school staff (not just office staff).

Staff will respond to pupil absenteeism firmly and consistently. Concerns over pupil attendance or punctuality will be brought to the attention of the Head Teacher.

Parents will be informed of any concerns that arise over their child's attendance. School will consider the individual circumstances of absences and inform parents if any request for absence is unauthorised.

## Governors

Governors monitor attendance to evaluate the effectiveness of the attendance policy, which is reviewed annually. Attendance figures are monitored by the Governing Body at Governing Body meetings, three times per year. Guidance may be sought from the Department for Education: [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk).

## Headteacher

The Head Teacher monitors individual pupil and whole school attendance and punctuality, and works in partnership with key agencies, including the School Attendance Support Service. The Head Teacher provides Governors with information to enable them to evaluate the success of policy and procedures, and communicates school policy to parents/carers. The Head Teacher will inform parents/carers by letter when a child's attendance falls below 90%. The absence data trawl will be completed three times a year for all pupils at the end of every "Big Term".

If there is a concern about attendance, for these pupils, attendance will be monitored more frequently – every half-term.

If a child's attendance is below 90% over a "Big Term", the school will usually initiate the Absence Timetable – see **Appendix 2**. The Big Terms are defined as: Autumn Terms 1 and 2 – September to Christmas, Spring Terms 1 and 2 – January to Easter and Summer Terms 1 and 2 – Easter to the end of the academic year in July.

### **Class teacher**

The Class Teacher provides an accurate record of the attendance of each pupil in their class and brings any concerns about attendance or punctuality to the attention of the Head Teacher promptly e.g. at a Staff Meeting.

### **Administrative staff**

The Bursar will ensure that the preparation, management and co-ordination of the use of SIMs (or other attendance management system) takes place, and that the Head Teacher is provided with attendance data on a termly basis, with more frequent updates as requested.

The office administrative staff will co-ordinate the "First Morning Response" and make every reasonable effort to contact the parents of a child who is absent without the school having been informed, to be sure of the child's whereabouts.

### **The Local Authority**

West Northamptonshire Council provides advice, support and challenge to schools, children and families, to maximise attendance at school. Enforcement action may be appropriate, including penalty notices and prosecutions.

## **Registration Procedures**

### **Times at which registers open and close:**

Registers will be opened at 8:50am and 1:10pm. Registers will close at 9.05am and 1.15pm.

Registers are taken electronically. If the electronic register facility is not available, paper copies on the Register Boards will be used. Once registration has ended, Register Boards must be sent to the office. Register Boards also carry messages between the office and the class teacher. Messages may also be added to the Class Door Wallet, particularly if they are received from parents outside of Registration times.

Absence codes are attached to each class Register Board.

### **Authorised absence**

It is ultimately up to the Head Teacher whether or not to authorise an absence. Requests for Absence will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances. A list giving examples of such circumstances is attached in **Appendix 1**. The headteacher may consult guidance from the National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT) or the School Attendance Support Service.

### **Unauthorised absence**

It is a parent's responsibility to ensure that their child attends school. Absence from school will not be authorised for holidays, parents working away from home, shopping, birthdays, minding the

house, caring for brothers/sisters/relatives or because suitable child-care arrangements cannot be made.

Absence for Medical Reasons is usually authorised. However, where there are concerns about a child's attendance, not all medical absences will be authorised. These situations will be discussed with parents / carers.

Parents and staff should understand that just because an explanatory letter from a parent has been received by the school, this does not mean that the absence will be authorised.

## **Poor Attendance**

If a child's attendance drops below 90% in any one Big Term, parents usually receive a letter of concern from the school.

If the child's attendance does not improve to above 90% in a specific time (e.g. before the next school holiday), parents usually receive a second communication.

If the child's attendance continues to be a concern (e.g. it is still below 90% during the following half-term), parents will be invited to attend a meeting.

At this meeting, a Parent Contract will be considered, outlining the expectations for improvements to attendance and making clear the procedures around unauthorised absence.

The school may involve the Local Authority School Attendance Support Service.

The school may report unauthorised absences to the Local Authority. The Local Authority may then become involved with the family. This may involve a Home Visit and / or a meeting. The Local Authority has the power to issue a Fixed Penalty Notice fine to the parents.

Examples include:

- 1) If a parent requests an absence for a holiday that results in an unauthorised absence of five or more consecutive school days, the school may refer the case to the Local Authority (unless the child is below statutory school age). Parents can be issued a Fixed Penalty Notice (fine) by the Local Authority for taking their child on holiday during term time without the authorised consent of the school.
- 2) If a child has ten or more sessions of unauthorised absence, this may be reported to the Local Authority. Sessions do not need to be consecutive. A session is one morning or one afternoon. Parents can receive a Fixed Penalty Notice from the Local Authority.

## **Lateness**

Pupils arriving after the playground gate is locked at 9.00am, must report to the school office so that their late arrival and an explanation can be recorded. Action to address lateness will be taken in line with the school's strategy to improve punctuality and attendance.

## **Medical/dental appointments**

Absence from school due to medical/dental appointment will usually be considered as an authorised absence. If, however, there is a concern about a child's attendance i.e. it has fallen below 90% for one Big Term, plus the following half-term, absence for medical reasons may be unauthorised. All parents/carers are encouraged to make medical appointments out of school hours. The school can decide not to authorise prolonged or repeated medical absences without doctor's note.

## Persistent absence

The Department for Education focuses on both authorised and unauthorised absence. “Persistent absence” refers to any absences totalling more than 20%, whether authorised or unauthorised.

Pupils with persistent absence are often those unlikely to attain at school or stay in education after the age of 16 years. They are also significantly more likely to engage in anti-social behaviour and youth crime and are more at risk of other negative outcomes (including teenage pregnancy and drug and alcohol abuse). Our school notifies parents before their child is identified as a Persistent Absentee, when their attendance drops below 90%, initially in any Big Term (see above).

## Procedures for following up absence: **First Morning Response**

- Parents are required to inform the school office if their child is absent, by 9.15am, leaving a message on the answer phone if necessary.
- **First Morning Response** – contact is made with the registered parent as soon as possible and at the latest by 10.00am on the first day of absence, if no reason is known.
- Reasonable attempts to contact a parent will be made and an answer phone/voice-mail/email message will be left if necessary.
- First Response contacts (and reply responses from parents) will be logged in the record book.
- If a response is not received from a parent by 12.00pm, arrangements may be made, wherever possible, to carry out a home visit.
- If a home visit cannot be made (e.g. the child lives in Northampton) or a home visit does not result in the safety and whereabouts of a child being known, the school could escalate the concern by contacting the MASH (Multi Agency Safeguarding Team).
- Teachers will be informed by way of a message from the office, of instances where the office is unmanned and make appropriate arrangements to ensure that the child's whereabouts is accounted for.
- **“Children Missing from Education”** - procedures outlined on the West Northamptonshire website will be applied.
- **Non-collection of Children and Unexplained Absence** procedures outlined in **Appendix 3**.

## Reporting to parents

- Parents should be informed over concerns relating to attendance. Copies of these letters are kept in the Attendance File in the school office.
- Attendance figures will be provided with annual reports.

## Appendix 1: Exceptional Circumstances

The following list gives examples of situations whereby a request for absence may be considered exceptional and might therefore be authorised:

- Holidays where a family member (child or parent) has a terminal illness;
- Adoption, Wedding and Funeral ceremonies;
- Holidays where a parent is a member of the armed forces and has served an extended period away from home in the last 12 months;
- Absence to attend a music exam or residential music course;

- Absence to view a prospective new school or sit an entrance exam;
- Approved sporting activities.

This list is not exhaustive. All absences are authorised at the discretion of the Headteacher. The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, unavoidable and short. By 'unavoidable', we mean an event that could not reasonably be scheduled at another time.

## **Appendix 2: Absence Timetable.**

**Letter 1** – sent when attendance has dropped below 90% during the previous Big Term (The Big Terms are defined as: Autumn Terms 1 and 2 – September to Christmas, Spring Terms 1 and 2 – January to Easter and Summer Terms 1 and 2 – Easter to the end of the academic year in July.)

**Letter 2** - If the child's attendance does not improve to above 90% in the next half-term (before the next school holiday), parents usually receive a second communication. This letter will state that if attendance does not improve, to above 90%, in a specified time, they will be required to attend a meeting.

**Letter 3** - If the child's attendance continues to be a concern (i.e. it is still below 90% during the following half-term), parents will be invited to attend a meeting. At this meeting, a Parent Contract will be considered, outlining the expectations for improvements to attendance and making clear the procedures around unauthorised absence. The school may involve the Local Authority School Attendance Support Service. The Local Authority may then become involved with the family. This may involve a Home Visit and / or a meeting. The Local Authority has the power to issue a Fixed Penalty Notice fine to the parents.

## **Appendix 3: Procedures for following up an Unexplained Absence or Non-Collection**

### **First Morning Response**

- Parents are required to inform the school office if their child is absent by 9.15am, leaving an email or a message on the answer phone if necessary.
- **First Morning Response** – contact is made with the registered parent by the office as soon as possible and at the latest by 10.00am on the first day of absence if no reason for the child's absence is known.
- Reasonable attempts to contact the parent will be made and an answer phone/voice-mail/email message will be left if necessary.
- First Response contacts (and reply responses from parents) will be logged in the Absence Record Folder by the office staff.
- If a response is not received from a parent by 12.00pm, arrangements will be made, wherever possible, to carry out a home visit.
- If a home visit cannot be made (e.g. the child lives in Northampton) or a home visit does not result in the safety and whereabouts of a child being known, the school will escalate the concern by contacting the MASH (Multi Agency Safeguarding Team): West Northants (Northampton, Daventry & South Northants): 0300 126 7000 – Option 1, Option 1
- Teachers will be informed by way of a message from the office or in the calendar, of instances where the office is completely unmanned and make appropriate arrangements to ensure that the child's whereabouts is accounted for. This will usually be with the Class Teacher (delegated to the TA).

### Non-Collection of a Child at the End of The Day

- Check with the office staff to see if a message has been received e.g. a parent is running late.
- Children waiting to be collected usually wait in the Library with an adult – this will usually be the Head Teacher, plus a second member of staff e.g. the class teacher.
- Depending on the age of the child, ask them who is collecting them today.
- After the Bus has left, from about 3.45pm, ring the child's first contact. Leave a message if necessary – "Just to let you know that X is safe at school but no one has arrived to collect them".
- If after a few minutes no reply is received, ring the first contact again.
- From 4pm ring the second contact.
- From 4.15pm ring both contact 1 & 2 again, plus any other contacts (Never No.10)
- Keep ringing at 15 minute intervals.
- The child must only be collected by someone for whom permission has been granted – NB this might not be a contact.
- If after an hour – by 5pm - there has been no response, ring the MASH for advice on: West Northants (Northampton, Daventry & South Northants): 0300 126 7000 – Option 1, Option 1
- Log the incident on the form in the Absence Record Folder in the office. Ensure that the Head Teacher is aware of the incident.

### Letter Templates

#### Letter 1

Dear XXXXX ,

We are obliged to report absences for the school as a whole to the Local Authority.

This letter is to inform you that .....’s attendance record from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2022 to 16<sup>th</sup> December 2022 fell below 90% and was .....% (rounded to 1 decimal place).

Any figure below 90% is of significant concern and we are obliged to inform you when your child's attendance drops below this. We expect XXXXX's attendance to improve by (date e.g. the next school holiday). If your child's attendance remains below 90%, you will receive a second letter and the Local Authority's School Attendance Support Officer may become involved. The Local Authority has the power to issue a Fixed Penalty Notice (fine) for unauthorised absences.

We understand that your child's absence may be due to a variety of reasons, including illness, which obviously can't be helped. We do respectfully request that you consider carefully the effect of absence from school on your child's progress. Please endeavour to avoid routine check-ups and holidays during term time wherever possible. Thank you.

Yours sincerely,  
Head Teacher



## Letter 2:

Dear XXXXX ,

This letter is to inform you that .....’s attendance record from (dates) was again below 90% and was .....% (rounded to 1 decimal place).

Any figure below 90% is of significant concern and we are obliged to inform you when your child’s attendance drops below this. We expect XXXXX’s attendance to improve by (date e.g. the next school holiday). If your child’s attendance remains below 90%, you will be required to attend a meeting at school, to discuss a Parent Contract, outlining the expectations for improvements to attendance and making clear the procedures around unauthorised absence. The Local Authority’s School Attendance Support Officer may become involved. The Local Authority has the power to issue a Fixed Penalty Notice (fine) for unauthorised absences. Please find attached our Attendance and Punctuality Policy so that you are fully aware of the consequences of any continued poor attendance.

If there is anything you would like to discuss or if there is any support you think we can offer to enable your child’s attendance to improve, please let us know.

We understand that your child’s absence may be due to a variety of reasons, including illness, which obviously can’t be helped. Please be aware that not all absences due to medical reasons are necessarily authorised. We do respectfully request that you consider carefully the effect of absence from school on your child’s progress. Please endeavour to avoid routine check-ups and holidays during term time wherever possible. Thank you.

Yours sincerely,  
Head Teacher

## Letter 3:

Dear XXXXX ,

This letter is to inform you that .....’s attendance record from (dates) was again below 90% and was .....% (rounded to 1 decimal place).

As previously advised in my letter (dated xxx), a meeting has been arranged at school, to discuss a Parent Contract, outlining the expectations for improvements to attendance. This meeting is on (date, time, location). Please confirm with the school office that you are able to attend.

As you already know, the Local Authority has the power to issue a Fixed Penalty Notice (fine) for unauthorised absences. Please find attached our Attendance and Punctuality Policy so that you are aware of the consequences of the Local Authority’s involvement.

Yours sincerely,  
Head Teacher