

CHELLINGTON CHURCH OF ENGLAND FEDERATION



Happiness Through Wisdom

"Gold there is, and rubies in abundance, but lips that speak knowledge are a rare jewel."

Proverbs 20:15

Christopher Reeves VA Primary School/

St. Lawrence VA Primary School

ATTENDANCE POLICY

December 2023

Review Date: Autumn 2025

INTRODUCTION

The Chellington Federation Church of England Federation is a Christian learning environment at the heart of its communities. We promote care and respect, and expect high standards in all aspects of Federation life.

As a Church of England Federation, the schools promote a friendly, caring, family ethos where everyone works as a team to support each other across all areas of school life thus encouraging Happiness through Wisdom - *"There is gold and a multitude of rubies; but the lips of knowledge are a precious jewel."* Proverbs 20:15

In each school, we aim to build communities clearly based on Christian values. At Christopher Reeves, the whole community is encouraged to 'Live our Values' being strong and courageous to follow God's love and stand steadfast. *"Be strong and courageous, do not be afraid, do not be discouraged, for the Lord, your God, will be with you wherever you go."* Joshua 1:9

At St Lawrence we encourage all children to 'Let Their Light Shine' through the core values of hope (Letting our light shine gives us hope for the future.), courage (We have courage to Let our Light Shine.) and perseverance (When we persevere our light can shine). *"Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."* Matthew 5: 14-16

This policy, and its associated procedures and protocols, is based on these key principles.

AIMS

We are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Promoting good attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Building strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school

We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

LEGISLATION AND GUIDANCE

This policy meets the requirements of the [working together to improve school attendance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of [The Education Act 1996](#)
- Part 3 of [The Education Act 2002](#)
- Part 7 of [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments\)](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

It also refers to:

- [School census guidance](#)
- [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)
- [Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools](#)

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The governing board

The governing board is responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

The link Governor for attendance is Justina Burnett

The Executive Headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance

The designated senior leader is responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the school
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having an oversight of data analysis
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- Building relationships with parents/carers to discuss and tackle attendance issues
- Creating intervention reintegration plans in partnership with pupils and their parents/carers
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is Sarah Bush and can be contacted via the school office on 01933 353531 (Christopher Reeves) or 01933 353530 (St Lawrence)

The attendance Officer

The school attendance officer is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see section 7)

- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance and the Executive Headteacher
- Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Advising the Executive Headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices

The attendance officer is Trish Mustoe at Christopher Reeves and Shelley Blackburn at St Lawrence.

Class teachers

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office.

School office staff

School office staff will:

- Take calls from parents/carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system

Parents/carers

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child
- Make sure their child attends every day and on time
- Ensure regular attendance and punctuality
- Ensuring their child is properly dressed and equipped as well as being ready to learn.
- Notifying the school on the same day, by 9am, if the child is absent or late via the school office by phone call, email or written note.
- Avoid, wherever possible, making medical/dental appointments during the school day. Parents are not to take family holidays in term time. Further guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/school-attendance-absence>

Any absence of any pupil will not be authorised until the parent provides a satisfactory explanation.

Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day on time

RECORDING ATTENDANCE

Attendance register

We will keep an attendance register, and place all pupils onto this register.

All registers at St Lawrence Church of England Primary School and Christopher Reeves Church of England Primary School are maintained using the SIMS Attendance computer module.

Registers are marked by the class teacher promptly at the start of the morning and afternoon sessions and the total number of children present indicated on the register.

The registers are marked between 08.50 and 09.00 and any child arriving after that time will be marked as late. The register closes at 09.20. The register is taken at 13.15 for the afternoon session.

In line with Government guidelines parents have been advised of the need to contact the school on the first morning of a child's absence. If no such notification is received the school is required to contact the parent/guardian. Any letters or messages regarding absences are recorded by Office Staff.

All children who arrive late for school, i.e. after registration has been taken, parents must report to the School Office and signed in the 'In and Out register book / file', located in the school office. The register is then amended with a late mark for the pupil concerned and the class total adjusted.

The following codes are used when completing the Absence Report form:

C	Other authorised circumstances
I	Illness
O	Unauthorised circumstances
F	Extended Family Holiday (agreed)
G	Unauthorised holiday
E	Excluded
L	Late
U	Late after 9.20am
P	Approved sporting activity
V	Education visit
B	Educated off site
H	Annual family holiday (agreed)
M	Medical/dental appointment
R	Religious observance
T	Traveller absence
W	Work experience/educated at home

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

We will also record:

- For pupils of compulsory school age Whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity if a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Pupils must arrive in school by 8.55am on each school day.

Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 9.00am or as soon as practically possible by calling the school office.

We will mark absence due to physical or mental illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

Where the absence is longer than 5 days or there are doubts about the authenticity of the illness, the school will ask for medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment.

However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

Parents can submit a request for a planned absence to be authorised; this must be submitted four weeks in advance, except in the cases of short notice medical appointments or unavoidable circumstances such as a family funeral.

Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code

Where a child is persistently late to school, a meeting will be called with the Executive Headteacher and the parents/carers to discuss how the school can support the family in ensuring the child gets to school on time.

Following up unexplained absence

Where any pupil we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- Call the pupil's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school will send an email and a text message to ask the parents/carers to call school to explain the absence.
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session
- Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving an education welfare officer

Reporting to parents/carers

The school will regularly inform parents/carers about their child's attendance and absence levels. This will take place as part of the interim reports that are sent home at the end of each school term and there will also be an attendance figure shared on the end of the school year report.

If a pupil's attendance falls below 92%, parents will be informed via a letter. The pupil's attendance will be monitored for the next three weeks and if no improvement is made, parents/carers will be invited in for an attendance meeting.

AUTHORISED AND UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE

Approval for term-time absence

The Executive Headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the Executive Headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

Examples of exceptional circumstances can include:

- attending the funeral of a close family member
- holidays for families of service personnel, if they have been on a long operational tour that prevents family contact
- holidays for families of professions that are refused leave during the school holidays (eg emergency nursing, police)

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least 4 weeks before the absence, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form, accessible via the school office. The Executive Headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness (including mental illness) and medical/dental appointments
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents/carers belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents'/carers' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision
- Sporting competitions or examinations

Legal sanctions

The school or local authority can fine parents/carers for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age. In this case, the school will follow the Bedford Borough Penalty Notice Code of Conduct which can be found as Appendix 1 to this policy.

If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent/carers must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

Penalty notices can be issued by the Executive Headteacher, local authority officer or the police.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

- The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

STRATEGIES FOR PROMOTING ATTENDANCE

At Christopher Reeves and St Lawrence Primary Schools, we understand that regular attendance is vitally important and we therefore ensure that attendance is a high priority. We promote good attendance at school through:

- Weekly class attendance awards for those year groups that have achieved 100% attendance awarded in Celebration Assembly
- End of term attendance certificates for individuals that have achieved 100% attendance during that school term (Bronze = 1 term. Silver = 2 terms and Gold = 3 terms).
- Whole school attendance is shared in the weekly newsletter and compared to national figures

ATTENDANCE MONITORING

Monitoring attendance

All attendance is closely monitored by the School Office Manager who will advise the Headteacher if there is a concern about individual pupils. The school attendance target is 96%. Percentages are reviewed termly and where pupils fall below 92% attendance, they are tracked weekly to ensure that they do not become persistent absentees. A register check is also completed and submitted to the Education Welfare Officer half termly. Pupil's attendance is also reported termly to parents and is recorded on interim and end of year School Reports.

Where the pupil's attendance falls below 90% following a cycle of monitoring, the Executive Headteacher will report to the EWO and request support or intervention as deemed necessary.

The school will also alert parents to poor patterns of punctuality, and through agreed actions, work together to improve this.

Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the governing board.

Analysing attendance

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

- Provide regular attendance reports to class teachers and other school leaders, to facilitate discussions with pupils and families
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies

Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Hold regular meetings with the parents/carers of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance

MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum every two years by the Executive Headteacher. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

LINKS WITH OTHER POLICIES

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy

REVIEW

This policy has been reviewed and agreed by the Governing Body on 7th December 2023 and will be renewed in Autumn 2025.

If you require a hard copy of this policy, please contact the school office.

Appendix 1



BEDFORD BOROUGH LOCAL AUTHORITY

PENALTY NOTICE CODE OF CONDUCT

This is to be replaced by a national code of conduct during the academic year 2022-23

RATIONALE

Regular and punctual attendance at school is both a legal requirement and essential for pupils to maximise their educational opportunities. In law an offence occurs if a parent* fails to secure a child's attendance at school at which they are a registered pupil and that absence is not authorised by the school. Parents are supported by school, Local Authority Services and Partner Agencies to overcome barriers to regular attendance.

Section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 empowers designated Local Authority (LA) Officers, Head Teachers (& Deputy and Assistant Head Teachers authorised by them) and the Police to issue Penalty Notices in cases of unauthorised absence from school. The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2004 came into force on 27 February 2004. Penalty Notices (Sections 444A & 444B) supplement the existing sanctions to enforce attendance at school currently available under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 and Section 36 of the Children Act 1989.

The issuing of Penalty Notices must conform to requirements of the Human Right Act 1998 and all other Equal Opportunities legislation.

The LA has the prime responsibility for developing a protocol within which all partners named in the Act will operate and has responsibility for the overall administration of the Penalty Notice Scheme.

This local code sets out the procedures and terms under which Penalty Notices can be issued in Bedford Borough. Authorised persons should issue Penalty Notices in compliance with this code in order to ensure that the powers are consistently applied.

PROCEDURES FOR ISSUING PENALTY NOTICES

Bedford Borough Education Welfare Service, in consultation with schools (and other agencies where appropriate) will be responsible for the decision to issue Penalty Notices. This will ensure consistency in the delivery of the scheme; avoid school-home conflicts and ensure that the Penalty Notices are not being issued when the process towards court prosecution has already started. The Education Welfare Service (EWS) will receive requests to issue Penalty Notices from schools, the police and neighbouring LAs. These requests will be considered provided that:

- all relevant and evidential information is supplied
- the circumstances of the pupil's absence meets the requirements of this protocol
- the issuing of a Penalty Notice does not conflict with other intervention strategies or other enforcement sanctions already being processed
- the requirements of the cross border protocols are met

The EWS will respond to all requests within a timely manner and where all criteria are met will:

- give a formal written warning to the parent* of the possibility that a Penalty Notice will be issued
- in the same letter, where relevant, set a period of 15 school days within which the pupil must have no unauthorised absence
- issue a Penalty Notice through the post at the end of the 15 day period if the required level of improvement has not been achieved

CIRCUMSTANCES WHERE A PENALTY NOTICE MAY BE ISSUED

A Penalty Notice can only be issued in cases of **unauthorised** absence.

The issuing of a Penalty Notice is considered appropriate:

- when the pupil has taken holiday during term-time and the absence has not been authorised by the school, providing the school has taken into account government and LA guidance to inform its decision making
- following a Truancy Patrol when the school has recorded the absence of the pupil as unauthorised
- in the early stages of intervention where the School or EWS believes that the sanction will lead to an improvement in attendance, e.g. persistent late arrival at school; parent's failure to attend/co-operate at a parenting contract meeting
- When a pupil is seen in a public place during school hours when the pupil is excluded from school

In the case of poor attendance, the use of Penalty Notices will be restricted to one per pupil in an academic year. If more than 1 parent* has parental responsibility, both parents will receive a Penalty Notice (i.e. 1 per parent per child). In situations where there is more than one pupil in a family with irregular school attendance, multiple Penalty Notices can be issued to the same parents during the year. However, this action must be subject to careful consideration and co-ordination. There will be no restriction on the number of times a parent may receive a warning on the possible issue of a Penalty Notice.

If the penalty notice is being issued for unauthorised leave of absence (coded in the register with G) then a penalty notice can be issued for each period of leave of absence during an academic year. Subject to the criteria below.

To ensure consistent delivery of Penalty Notices, the following criteria will apply:

- at least 10 sessions (5 school days) lost to unauthorised absence by the pupil during the last 12 school weeks
- except in cases of unauthorised leave of absence or exceptional circumstances, the parent* will receive a formal warning of the possibility of a Penalty Notice being given and a maximum of 15 school days to effect an improvement.

PROCEDURE FOR WITHDRAWING PENALTY NOTICES

A Penalty Notice can only be withdrawn in the following circumstances:

- when it has been issued to the wrong person
- when the use of the Penalty Notice did not conform to the terms of this protocol
- it contains a material error
- Not paid, and the LA has not and does not intend to instigate proceedings.

PAYMENT OF PENALTY NOTICES

The arrangement for the payment will be detailed on the Penalty Notice. The penalty is £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days of receipt of the Notice (a notice served by post is deemed to have been received on the second day after posting it by first class post).

The LA will retain any revenue from Penalty Notices to cover enforcement costs.

Non-payment of a Penalty Notice will result in the immediate prosecution of parents* under the provisions of Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 unless;

- The notice was materially defective
- The Local Authority has not started legal proceedings and has no intention of doing so

POLICY AND PUBLICITY

The deployment of Penalty Notices as a sanction is included in the Authority's Attendance Strategy. **All school Attendance policies should include information on the deployment of Penalty Notices which should be brought to the attention of parents.** The LA will include information on the use of Penalty Notices and other attendance enforcement sanctions in promotional information material.

REPORTING AND REVIEW

The Education Welfare Service will report at regular intervals on the deployment and outcomes of the use of Penalty Notices. The Service Annual Report will include information and analysis of the use of the Notices.

A review of the deployment of the Penalty Notices will be undertaken at regular intervals and the strategy amended as appropriate.

***Definition of a parent**

Section 576, Education Act 1996 defines a parent as:

- all natural parents, whether named or not
- any person who although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility (as defined in Children Act 1989) for a child or young person
- any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of the child or young person. A person with whom the child lives and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their relationship is with the child, is considered a parent in education law.

Throughout this document 'parent' means each and every person referred to within this definition.

September 2014