



### **Achieving good attendance to school:**

Attendance to educational settings fell significantly short of acceptable levels over recent terms as a result of the Covid-19 guidance and various National lockdowns. However, now that the guidance has been updated and relaxed, it is pertinent to remind parents/carers of our high expectations in relation to attendance, our monitoring systems, and the importance of meeting the expectations in regard to attendance. Of course, there will always be very valid and understandable reasons for non-attendance to school – including illness, bereavement and other exceptional circumstances. However, all too often attendance levels fall below acceptable levels quite unnecessarily and as a result of poor planning or a lack of resilience. The impact of poor attendance is well documented and incredibly detrimental to the future life chances of young people – at CFS we are committed to doing all that we can to ensure that our pupils attend regularly and punctually. Outlined below is the core information relating to the expectations and regulations on attendance to school.

### **What is regarded as poor attendance?**

A pupil who is regarded as a poor attendee is someone who has an attendance rate of 96% or below, which equates to 7 days absent throughout the academic year. Poor attendance is an easy category to fall in to – especially at the start of the academic year when the number of potential days in school is at its lowest. Any holidays taken during term time are almost certainly going to result in a child's attendance becoming a cause for concern.

### **What is the legal requirement?**

By law, all children of compulsory school age (between 5 and 16) must receive a suitable, full-time education. As a parent/carers, the responsible for ensuring that this happens lies with you – either by registering your child at a school or by making other arrangements which provide a suitable full-time education. Once your child is registered at a school you are responsible for making sure that he or she attends regularly. If your child fails to attend regularly – even if they miss school without you knowing – the Local Authority (LA) may take legal action against you. The LA is responsible for making sure that parents/carers fulfil their responsibilities. Parents/carers are responsible for making sure that their registered children regularly attend school or any alternative provision arranged them. If you think you might need to take your child out of school, you have a responsibility to discuss the reasons with the school as soon as possible. Reasons such as family bereavement or taking part in an agreed religious observance would be acceptable for short absences. Unacceptable reasons for missing school include family holidays, birthdays and shopping.

### **What is the impact of poor attendance?**

The impact of poor attendance to school is widespread – initially it serves as a barrier to settling in to the routine of school life, and hinders a child's ability to make and maintain meaningful relationships with their peers and trusted adults. This in itself can then result in a child becoming disinclined to attend school and lead to school refusal.

As well as the detrimental social impacts, there is a strong correlation between attendance and academic outcomes. In primary schools less than 65% of children achieve good results in English and Maths with an average of 15 days absence a year compared to almost 90% where the average is less than 8 days. Research also shows that pupils who miss 17 school days will drop a whole grade at GCSE across all subjects studied. When attendance falls to 50% only 3% of pupils will go on to achieve 5 or more GCSEs at a Grade 4 or above.

Often parents/carers are surprised by how quickly attendance can escalate and become a cause for significant concern. An average attendance of 80% or less across a child's school career adds up to missing a whole 2 years from school. Being late for school reduces learning time – if your child is 5 minutes late to school/lesson every day, they will miss three whole days of learning each year. If your child is 15 minutes late every day they will miss 2 weeks of learning each year. At CFS, if a pupil is 20 minutes or later to school this constitutes an unauthorised session.

### **Unauthorised absences and the repercussions:**

On average, there are 185 non-school days in the academic year and we expect that holidays, family events etc are organised during these times to limit the impact on your child's attendance and therefore future life chances. Therefore, requests to take your child out of school during term time are highly likely to be unauthorised. We follow the Department for Education and LA's guidance when coding a pupil's absence and work within the tight parameters set by them. The guidance allows for little to no discretion on the school's part.

Without sufficient medical evidence, absences for illnesses will be unauthorised for pupils whose attendance is already a cause for concern and for pupils who are absent for three or more consecutive days. The Attendance Officer, Mrs Wickenden, will contact you and request medical evidence in an attempt to authorise the absences if appropriate to do so.

The LA can use various legal powers if your child is missing school without a good reason. This can include a Parenting Order, an Education Supervision Order, a School Attendance Order, a Fixed Penalty Notice, or ultimately prosecution – a fine of up to £2,500, a community order or a jail sentence.

When Mrs Wickenden makes contact and requests medical evidence and other information in relation to your child's absence from school she does so in an attempt to justify the absence as one with good reason. Unfortunately, some of the communication that she receives in response is unkind – please be reminded that all members of CFS staff are here to help and support your child, and do not expect to receive abusive and unkind communication. Communication of this nature is not appropriate and will not be tolerated, we are proud of our Culture of Kindness within the School and ask for your help and support in creating a Culture of Kindness beyond the School site.

### **What should I do if my child is absent?**

As stated above, there are typically around 185 non-school days in an academic year and so we expect that all arranged appointments, family events, holidays etc are taken during these times so that a child's attendance doesn't fall below 97%. Of course, it is not always possible to get an appointment during non-school time and in these rare and exceptional circumstances you should notify the school in advance via [absence@chichesterfreeschool.org.uk](mailto:absence@chichesterfreeschool.org.uk). The impact of these appointments on attendance should be kept to an absolute minimum for example, we would not authorise a whole day's absence for a dental appointment – we would expect the child to attend school for the majority of the day and sign out for the appointment.

Should your child fall ill and need to stay at home, please inform the School as soon as possible via the 'report an absence' enquiry form on the website. On occasions that the absence will last for more than one school day, we ask for parents/carers to report the absence on each school day.