



## Policy statement

### **The importance of regular attendance**

Our collaboration of non-academy primary schools in Weymouth and Portland are committed to working together to ensure we offer parents and carers a consistent approach to promoting good school attendance. This approach and the rationale behind it is described below. All of the Chesil Collaboration schools follow the Department for Education 'Working together to improve school attendance' statutory guidance – applicable from 19 August 2024.

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It is essential to the future happiness and employment prospects of children and young people that they form good habits of regular attendance at school from an early age and that good attendance is maintained throughout their time at school.

It is the parents' and carers' responsibility to ensure that their children attend school. This is a legal requirement and one that should be taken seriously. However, our schools would rather take a more positive approach by focusing on the very definite and positive aspects to regular attendance which will benefit all child's learning and wellbeing.

Good attendance in primary school is important for many reasons:

- It helps children do well in their learning. The best place children can learn is in class with their teacher. **The more often they are in class, the more progress they will make.**
- Being in school regularly is good for children's mental health and wellbeing. Not only are they able to develop their sense of belonging as part of the school community, children are able to develop their confidence in learning and social situations. This helps them to enjoy school and to find it rewarding.
- It allows children to take part in and enjoy the varied activities and events that develop more rounded aspects of children's character and enrich their experience of school.
- Good attendance improves academic performance and reading skills. Research shows that students who attend school regularly achieve better results in exams and assessments than those who miss school frequently. **Every day in school counts**, and missing even a few days can affect children's progress and confidence.
- Good attendance helps children learn how to socialise with others, to follow directions and develop the confidence to solve problems creatively. These are essential skills for life beyond education and for future employment. Employers look for people who are reliable, punctual and cooperative, and good attendance demonstrates these qualities.
- Good attendance may also lead to the earlier identification of more serious concerns for families. If families are struggling with any issues that affect a child's attendance, such as illness, anxiety, bullying or family problems, the school can offer advice, guidance and support to help overcome them.
- Good attendance increases children's chances of doing well later in life. Evidence shows that students who have high attendance throughout their time in school tend to have higher incomes and better job opportunities in the long term.

#### **Children should only be kept off school in exceptional circumstances**

Every moment in school counts, and days missed add up quickly. For example, a child who is absent for three days will miss over 19 hours of school - time they will never get back. The higher a pupil's attendance, the more they are likely to learn.

#### **Holidays in term time**

No school will authorise absence for a holiday during the term.

Whilst we all understand the financial pressures which make these holidays more attractive, we ask parents and carers to prioritise their children's learning. There are 6 designated holiday periods in the school year, of around 12 weeks in total, and we ask all parents to use these times instead.

If parents or carers disregard the need for regular attendance, and still insist on removing their children for a holiday, any such absence will be recorded as unauthorised absence and may be liable to a penalty notice from Dorset Council. It may also result in legal action.

### **Absence through illness**

If a child is ill, parents and carers **must** inform the school as soon as possible. Our schools all operate a targeted 'First Day Call' system, which means that, if no notification has been received, parents and carers will be contacted to find out why the child is not in school. There are clear safeguarding concerns in these situations and it is important parents and carers understand their responsibilities to keep school informed of any absence.

Whilst we understand that children do become ill, children who lose a lot of time at school can suffer in the long term from significant gaps in their learning. Schools have the right to request evidence of illness and will do so if a child builds up considerable absence through illness over a period of time. If a child's health continues to affect their education, schools are obliged to make a referral to the School Medical Officer to ensure that all that can be done is being done.

### **Absence for appointments**

Wherever possible, parents and carers should make all appointments outside of school hours. Removing a child from class to attend an appointment, or bringing them in late, is very disruptive to the child, the teacher, and the rest of the class.

If the appointment is unavoidable, parents and carers should be ready to provide evidence, such as the appointment confirmation letter.

### **Lateness**

We also ask parents and carers to ensure that children arrive at school on time every day. Being late can disrupt the child's learning and affect their confidence and self-esteem. It can also cause inconvenience for other pupils and teachers who have to repeat or delay lessons. Being late after registers have closed is classed as an unauthorised absence.

### **In summary**

Children's attendance is really important. Parents and carers are asked to do all they can to help children attend as much as possible, and, especially, to avoid holidays in term time.

If a child is going to be absent for whatever reason, parents and carers should let the school know as soon as possible.

We are here to support all families and children to achieve good attendance. If any parent or carer has any concerns or difficulties that may affect their child's attendance, we ask that they contact us as soon as possible. We can offer advice, guidance and practical help to improve the situation. We can also link parents and carers with other agencies that can provide further support for their family.

We appreciate parents and carers cooperation and partnership in ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually. Together, we can help every child reach their full potential and enjoy their time at school.

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This policy statement has been agreed by the Headteachers of the following schools:

Caroline Wood	Southill Primary School
Andrew Johnson	Conifers Primary School
Leif Pallister	Bincombe Valley Primary School
Kathy McCann	Radipole Primary School
Alana Fordham	Holy Trinity Primary School
Wanda Roberts	Wyke Regis Primary Federation
Michael Coombs	St George's Primary School