

THE CHARTER SCHOOLS

EDUCATIONAL TRUST

Charles Dickens Primary School and Nursery

Attendance and Punctuality Policy

Owner:	L Ellis	School Improvement Partner	
Reviewed by:	S Varcoe	Head of Governance	
Date: September 2022			
Approved by:	Headteacher	Date:	September 2022

Next Review Date:	September 2024
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1. Introduction

Our mission at The Charter Schools Educational Trust (hereafter referred to as the ‘Trust’) is to inspire and nurture children and young people in South London to excel, through education that transforms lives. A key factor in delivering this is a child’s attendance at school.

It is only by attending school regularly (96% or more of the time) and punctually, will children and young people be able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. High achievement depends on good attendance. Children who miss out on lessons are at risk of falling behind and statistics show that children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school.

Attendance	Description	Approx. days lost per year	Approx. weeks lost per year
99-100%	Excellent	0-4	Less than 1
96-98%	Good	5-9	1-2
95%	Satisfactory	10-13	2-3
90-94%	Unsatisfactory	14-18	3-4
Below 90%	Persistent Absence	More than 19 Equivalent to 38 sessions	More than 4

The whole school community, including pupils, parents and carers, teaching and support staff and Trustees and local Governors, have a responsibility for ensuring good school attendance and have important roles to play. The purpose of the policy is to clarify everyone’s part in this. The policy is based on current government and Local Authority guidance and statutory regulations. The school will ensure that all members of the school community are made aware of the policy and have access to it.

2. Legal framework

The Education Act 1996 states that:

- The parent/carer of every child of compulsory school age shall cause them to receive efficient full-time education suitable
 - a) to their age, ability and aptitude, and
 - b) to any special educational needs, they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.
- A person begins to be of compulsory school age
 - a) when they attain the age of five, if they attain that age on a prescribed day, and
 - b) otherwise at the beginning of the prescribed day next following their attaining that age.
- A person ceases to be of compulsory school age at the end of the day which is the school leaving date for any calendar year.
 - a) if they attain the age of 16 after that day but before the beginning of the school year next following,
 - b) if they attain that age on that day, or
 - c) (unless paragraph (a) applies) if that day is the school leaving date next following their attaining that age.

The Charter Schools Educational Trust and its schools are dedicated to complying with attendance laws set out by the legal framework and has set out this attendance and punctuality policy accordingly.

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Education Act 1996
- Equality Act 2010
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (as amended)
- DfE (2022) 'Working together to improve school attendance'
- DfE (2016) 'Children missing education'
- DfE (2022) 'Keeping children safe in education 2022'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following Trust/school policies:

- Complaints Procedures Policy
- Children Missing Education Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- SEND Policy
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy
- Pupils with Additional Health Needs Attendance Policy

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1. The Trust Board is responsible for:

- Recognising the importance of school attendance and promoting it across the Trust's ethos and policies
- Ensuring that effective practice on attendance management and improvement across its schools.
- Ensuring there is a Children Missing Education Policy in place and that this is regularly reviewed and updated.

3.2. The local governing board (LGB) has overall responsibility for:

- Monitoring the implementation of this policy and all relevant procedures across the school.
- Promoting the importance of good attendance through the school's ethos and policies.
- Working with the school leaders to set goals for attendance and providing support and challenge around delivery against those goals.
- Ensuring that this policy, as written, does not discriminate on any grounds including, but not limited to, ethnicity/national origin, culture, religion, gender, disability or sexual orientation.
- Handling complaints regarding this policy as outlined in the Trust's Complaints Policy.
- Having regard to 'Keeping children safe in education' when making arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

3.3 The headteacher is responsible for:

- The day-to-day implementation and management of this policy and all relevant procedures across the school.
- Arranging attendance training for all relevant staff that is appropriate to their role.
- Appointing a member of the SLT to take the strategic lead on attendance.
- Ensuring all parents are aware of the school's attendance expectations and procedures.

- Ensuring that every pupil has access to full-time education and will act as early as possible to address patterns of absence.

3.4 All staff at Charles Dickens Primary School are responsible for:

- Following this policy and ensuring pupils do so too.
- Ensuring this policy is implemented fairly and consistently.
- Modelling good attendance behaviour.
- Using their professional judgement and knowledge of individual pupils to inform decisions as to whether any welfare concerns should be escalated.
- Where designated, taking the attendance register at the relevant times during the school day.
- Providing an environment in which all our pupils are eager to learn, feel valued members of the school community and look forward to coming to school every day.

3.5 A designated member of the school's Senior Leadership Team will be identified as the school's strategic lead on attendance and will be responsible for:

- They will ensure that the Attendance Policy is consistently applied throughout the school
- The overall strategic approach to attendance in school.
- Developing a clear vision for improving attendance.
- Monitoring attendance and the impact of interventions.
- Analysing attendance data and identifying areas of intervention and improvement.
- Reporting on attendance to the Senior Leadership Team and local governing body.
- Following up on incidents of persistent poor attendance.
- Informing the LA of any pupil being deleted from the admission and attendance registers.

3.6 The Attendance Officer and Early Help Manager will:

- be responsible for attendance on a day-to-day basis and will provide support to any pupils whose attendance drops below 96%.
- be responsible for liaising with the class teacher in relation to pupil absence
- Contacting parents/carers to discuss the pupil's attendance where concerns arise.
- Collating attendance data and providing this along with information to the Senior Leader with strategic responsibility for attendance on a regular basis.
- maintaining the electronic registers
- signing in pupils in who arrive late
- carrying out first day calling and, ensuring letters are sent to parents and carers, as directed by the Senior Leader with strategic responsibility for attendance.

3.7 Parents are responsible for:

- Providing accurate and up-to-date contact details.
- Providing the school with more than one emergency contact number.
- Updating the school if their details change.
- Promoting good attendance with their children.
- Ensure their children attend the school regularly (at least 96% or more) and on time
- Support their children's attendance by keeping requests for absence to a minimum
- Parents are also be expected to:
 - notify school on the first day of absence and on each subsequent day of absence, unless medical evidence is provided which defines the necessary length of absence.
 - Provide medical evidence when asked in order to authorise an absence due to illness.

3.8 Pupils are responsible for:

- Being aware of the importance of regular school attendance and punctuality.
- Attending their lessons and any agreed activities when at school on time.
- Ensuring they attend the school regularly (96% or more) and on time.
- Speak to their class teacher, a member of the pastoral team or the attendance officer if they are having difficulties that may prevent them from attending school regularly or are causing them to arrive at school late.

4 Attendance expectations

The school has high expectations for pupil's attendance and punctuality, and ensures that these expectations are communicated regularly to parents/carers and pupils.

4.1 Class Registers

Class registers are recorded using BROMCOM. The system ensures that no children are missed and that pupil information can be shared quickly and securely. Registers are the only way of recording pupil attendance and must be completed accurately. This is the responsibility of whichever member of staff has been directed to take the register for that session. Registers are legal documents and can be used in a court of law, so they **MUST** be accurate.

4.2 Morning registration

- Charles Dickens Primary School will be open to all pupils from 8:30 am in the morning. The school day starts at 8:45am, and pupils will be expected to be in their classroom, ready to start the day by this time. The register will be taken at 8:45am.
- Pupils who arrive after 8:45am will need to report to reception and sign in as late (L).
- The morning registers will close at 9am across the school, and any pupil who arrives after this time will be marked as unauthorised absence (U).
- We will conform to the time on the clock in the main school office to meet the times listed above.

4.3 Afternoon registration

- Registers must be submitted straight after lunch before afternoon lessons commence at 1pm for Years R, 1, 2 and 3. 2pm for years 4, 5 and 6.

5 Categorising absence

5.1 Any pupil who is not present during registration will be marked as absent, unless authorised leave has been granted by the school in advance or the reason for absence is already known and accepted by the school as legitimate. The decision about whether the absence should be authorised or unauthorised rests with the Headteacher or other designated staff.

Parents/carers cannot authorise absences and should be aware that while calling the school or providing a note for an absence complies with safeguarding procedures, it does not automatically mean an absence will be authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence will always rest with the school.

If no explanation about an absence is received by the school within 1 week, the absence will remain unauthorised.

5.2 Authorised Absence

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Absences may be authorised by the Headteacher or other designated staff in the following circumstances:

- Leave has been granted by the headteacher in advance in exceptional circumstances and for a very limited period, (code C)

*NB an application must be made in writing on the prescribed form (**Appendix 2**), with appropriate evidence, in advance of the intended circumstance wherever possible. Amendments have been made to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006. From 1st September 2013 Term-time absence will NOT be authorised unless there are exceptional circumstances.*

- The school is satisfied that the child is too ill to attend. -In cases of recurring absences, a medical certificate from the family GP or medical specialist will be required. For long term issues a letter from a hospital consultant will be required and this must be updated at least every 6 months. The EWO may also ask parents of students whose attendance is less than 90% for permission to contact the GP to ascertain reasons for poor absence to school. (Code I)
 - The pupil has a medical or dental appointment (code M) (although parents should endeavour to make these out of school hours wherever possible, and to return their child to school immediately afterwards – or send them to school beforehand)
 - There is an unavoidable cause for the absence which is beyond the family's control, e.g. extreme weather conditions (code C)
 - The absence occurs on a school day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent belongs. Code R is usually set aside for well-recognised and published religious observance from one of the six major religions e.g. Eid, Orthodox Christmas. Other types of cultural observance will be considered on a case by case basis by the school. If the request is for more than one day, this will also be considered on a case by case basis. Day One is recorded as code R and subsequent days as code C. Parent/carers will be aware of these dates and should give the school written notification in advance.
 - The pupil is of no fixed abode, their parent is engaged in a trade which requires them to travel, the pupil has attended school as often as the nature of the trade permits and, having reached the age of six, they have attended 200 sessions in the preceding 12 months (code T)
 - Where a pupil is engaged in off-site approved educational activities, the school will check their attendance on a daily basis before entering the appropriate code in the register. (code B)

5.3 Absence related to COVID 19

If a pupil has a **confirmed** case of COVID (through the use of a test (LFT or PCR)), then they should stay at home for at least 3 days. This starts the day after they did the test. After the three days has finished, if they are well and do not have a temperature then they can return to school even if tests are still showing positive.

There is no requirement for any person to self-isolate because they have COVID or have been in close contact with someone who has COVID

5.4 Unauthorised absence

Except in the circumstances described above, absences will be unauthorised. Some examples of unauthorised absence would be:

- Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily or without reason
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Arrival at school after the register has closed
- The pupil is staying at home to mind the house

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- Staying at home to care for a sick or disabled parent / carer / family member.
- Absence due to shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Absence due to day trips and holidays in term-time which have not been agreed
- Truancy before or during the school day
- The parent / carer has medical appointment
- General anxiety about COVID-19 resulting in refusal to come to school
- Siblings are unwell so the child is not coming in
- Leaving school for no reason during the day

Unauthorised absence codes are:

Code U – late after the registers close (as detailed above)

Code O – the absence is not authorised by the school, even though a reason may have been given for the absence. Only the school can authorise.

Code G – a holiday during term time or leave of absence that has not been authorised.

5.5 Persistent absence/severe absence

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more school sessions across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level has been proven to do considerable damage to any child's education and we need parent's fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

Severe absence is when a pupil is missing 50% or more school sessions across the school year. Where this is unauthorised absence (i.e. not due to medical conditions which the school is aware of) this is breaking the law and is extremely serious.

We monitor all absence and the reasons given thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the persistent absence mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and we will inform the parents/carers immediately.

6 Collection and analysis of data

The school uses BROMCOM to keep an electronic record of attendance.

The Senior Leader with strategic attendance responsibility will ensure that attendance data is complete, accurate, analysed and reported to the senior leadership team, to parents and the Local governing body as appropriate. The data will inform the school's future practice to improve attendance and prevent disaffection.

Attendance is monitored by individual child, year group, class/Tutor group and by reasons of absence. It is also analysed by gender, ethnicity, pupils with special educational needs and those who are vulnerable to poor attendance. This data is used to identify where intervention and support is required to improve attendance.

Accurate attendance returns are made to the Department of Education (DfE) within the stipulated time frame.

6.1 School Strategies to tackle absence

The Charles Dickens Primary School are responsible for the school management of attendance, policy and systems to ensure that Charles Dickens Primary School intervene in non-attendance at an early stage. The Attendance Officer meets with the Senior Leader with strategic attendance responsibility on a weekly basis to review any pupils where attendance concerns exist and to monitor the impacts of any actions taken.

Where there is an emerging pattern for a pupil's absence or if staff are particularly concerned, the school will contact the parents (read also carers) to discuss reasons for the absences with them. Plans should be put in place with the family and pupil to resolve any difficulties and improve the attendance within a specified time limit. It will be explained to parents that any future absences may be unauthorised unless there is clear evidence of a good reason for them. If the pattern persists a Penalty Notice referral may be issued where no improvement is seen.

Our approach to tackling unacceptable levels of absence is bespoke and takes into account the individual circumstances of the family. We recognise that absence may be a symptom of other challenges, and we aim to help address those challenges.

6.2 First-day calling

If a child is absent from school and the school has not received a phone call or other message from the parent/carers, a first day absence call will be made to establish the whereabouts of the child and that they are safe. School staff will make every effort to establish contact with the parent and speak to them to confirm where the child is.

If we are unable to establish contact with the parents, we will contact the emergency numbers provided.

If we have been unable to make contact with the family and confirm the safety of the child, we will do our best to do a home visit to the household. This will always been done in pairs. If we are still unable to confirm the safe whereabouts of the child, we will make contact with the police.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) will routinely share a list of vulnerable children with the school administration team, and the admin team will notify the DSL immediately if a child on that list is not in school, on the first day of absence, and each subsequent day.

6.3 Lateness and punctuality

Pupils are expected to arrive at school by 8:45am every day. For health and safety reasons it is important that the school knows who is in the building.

Pupils arriving late should therefore report to the School Office on arrival (with their parent/carers) to sign in and provide an explanation for the late arrival. It is important that all pupils arriving late follow this procedure.

Pupils who arrive after the register closes will be marked as absent for the whole session (a session being a morning or an afternoon). This absence will be unauthorised unless the school is satisfied that there is a legitimate reason for the pupil to be late.

For the same reason it is important that pupils who need to leave the premises legitimately (e.g. for a medical appointment), or return to school later in the day after a legitimate reason, sign in and out and provide a reason for leaving early. On his/her subsequent return to school, they must sign in again to say that they have returned.

8. Tackling excessive sickness absence (Code I and code M)

In aiming to maintain an average attendance of at least 96% across an academic year, a child cannot miss more than 8 days in total. We use this benchmark to consider carefully how we define excessive sickness absence.

We recognise that some of our pupils have medical conditions or disabilities that necessitate them having more days than this. Where a pupil has no known diagnosis and misses many days due to sickness absence over a period of time, the parents/carers will be warned that in order to authorise any further absence due to illness, medical evidence will be required, even if it is for half a day.

We would always give plenty of warning, opportunities for discussion and implement support from other agencies where we can for families, before that decision is taken. This requirement will never be a surprise or brought in too quickly.

We view medical evidence as something that does not place additional pressures on health professionals, something that is easily obtainable:

- Appointment slip
- Prescription issued
- Email /text message confirming appointment
- Mobile phone record to show the number you called and the duration of the call.

9. Term-time absence due to exceptional circumstances (code C)

9.1 The Headteacher will consider each application individually. An application must be made in writing on the prescribed form (**Appendix 2**), with appropriate evidence, in advance of the intended circumstance wherever possible. Charles Dickens Primary will only consider authorising leave of absence for the following: -

- Serious and sudden illness of a close relative and you must leave in an emergency (see 9.2)
- A one off never to be repeated occasion that can only happen at that time e.g. wedding or funeral
- Any religious observance (one day only under code R)
- A significant educational opportunity afforded **to the child** by a national organisation e.g. ballet, exams, filming for a TV commercial, taking part in a West End production
- If a parent is service personnel and is returning from a tour of duty abroad where it is evidenced the individual will not be in receipt of any **leave** in the near future that coincides with **school** holidays.

9.2 What do we mean by serious and sudden?

- Serious means an accident, injury, illness, disease, or physical or mental condition that: poses imminent danger of death; requires inpatient care in a hospital, hospice, or residential medical facility.
- Examples of this are: road traffic accident, diagnosis of a life limiting illness, deterioration of a life limiting illness.
- Sudden means it has happened and it wasn't expected.
- For time away from education it has to be the type of situation for where you receive communication that requires you to leave immediately to travel.
- We will require evidence of the seriousness of the situation, which you can bring back with you.

10 Issuing fixed penalty notices and initiating court proceedings

As a school within The Charter Schools Educational Trust we will make full use of the law and issue fixed penalty notices and court proceedings where the conditions for this have been fulfilled. Fixed penalty notices are issued where there are many unauthorised absences on a child's attendance certificate, in accordance with the local authority's code of conduct (detailed below).

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Currently in Southwark a fine can be issued under the following circumstances (p25 of the Southwark code of conduct):

- **Unauthorised term-time leave: (G)** Child misses 10+ am and pm sessions during any 50 school days. The leave does not have to be consecutive. The Headteacher should consider evidence of previous unauthorised term time leave (last 3 years) and evidence of parents having been warned about a penalty notice
- **Lateness:** 20+ (U) codes in a half term
- **Non-Engagement:** In cases where all attempts have been made to engage the family and they have failed all meetings offered and attendance remains a concern

11 Referral to the Child Missing Education (CME) Service

If, after repeated attempts, we are unable to contact any family to establish for sure where the children are, we are obliged to make a referral to the local authority to say this is a child 'missing education' This is an important safeguarding duty and it ensure that circumstances where children are missing from education are swiftly and appropriately responded to. This will be in accordance with our Children Missing from Education Policy and the local authority procedures.

Appendix 1 - Attendance Interventions

Stage One:

If a child's attendance is dipping and is likely to hit 90% in the future, an letter will be sent to the parent allarting them and offering them support if needed.

Stage Two:

If the attendance continues to drop and gets closer to 90%, the Attendance Officer will contact the parent and request a meeting. In this meeting, support will be offered.

Stage Three:

Attendance is 90% or below, the Headteacher or other senior leader in their absence will meet with the family. At this point, external support from Early Help may be provided.

Appendix 2

Form to request leave from school in exceptional circumstances

*To be completed and returned to the school prior to the leave, along with a letter detailing the "exceptional circumstance for which the leave of absence is required.

Parent/Guardian Name and Address	Guidance
	<p>Leave of absence may only be granted by a person authorised in that behalf by the proprietor of the school. As from 1st September 2013, the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 amended Regulation 7 to prohibit the proprietor of a maintained school from granting leave of absence to a pupil, except where an advance application has been made by the parent with whom the pupil normally resides, and the proprietor considers that there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application. <u>If your child is absent from school 'on holiday' without authorisation you are risking a fixed penalty notice of £60 being issued.</u></p>
<p>How to use this form</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Use for all absences other than sickness. ▪ Return form to school in <u>advance</u> of requested absence otherwise the absence will automatically be unauthorised. ▪ Use a separate form for each child and each absence. 	<p>Taking your child out of school during term time could be detrimental to your child's educational progress. There is <u>no</u> entitlement to parents to take their child out of school during term time, however, you may apply to the school for leave of absence if you believe there are exceptional circumstances.</p>
<p>Name of child:</p>	<p>Class:</p>
<p>Is this the first request for absence this academic year?</p>	<p>YES / NO</p>

Dates of absence requested: The 1st day of absence from school is..... I will return to school on..... At 9:00am		No. of school days requested:
Which exceptional reason does your request fulfil? (please tick) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serious AND sudden illness of a close relative and you must leave in an emergency • A one-off, never to be repeated occasion that can only happen at that time, e.g. wedding/funeral. • Any religious observance • A significant educational opportunity afforded to the child by a national organisation e.g. ballet exams, filming for a TV commercial, taking part in a West End production • If a parent is service personnel and is returning from a tour of duty abroad where it is evidenced the individual will not be in receipt of any leave in the near future that coincides with school holidays 	Please explain in more detail.	
Contact details whilst abroad/absent from school If your child is being taken out of school during term time and the details of their location is not provided, this could turn into a serious safeguarding issue. When a child is absent or missing from school, they could be at risk of harm. The school has a duty to keep children safe and this includes knowing where they are. If the Parent/Carer fails to provide the required information, then the school may make a referral to the police or the Local Authority.		
Address whilst away:		
Telephone number whilst away:		
Email address whilst away:		
Please attach proof of where you will be whilst away		
I make application for my child to have authorised absence from school. I understand that if this is not agreed then any subsequent absence will be treated as unauthorised and this could lead to a penalty notice or a summons to court for irregular school attendance.		
I have read and understood the guidance above.		
Parent 1*: Title: _____ Full Name: _____ Tel: _____		
Relationship to child: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____		
Parent 2*: Title: _____ Full Name: _____ Tel: _____		
Relationship to child: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____		

*This is defined as any adult with legal parental responsibility for a child.	
School to complete	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child's current attendance • How many days' holiday already taken this academic year? • Is the Education Welfare Officer working with the family? • Is Children's Services supporting the family? • Is the request for leave during the exam period? • Has the school received proof of where the child is stay during absence? • Does the request fit the exceptional criteria? • Has a written response been sent to all parents/carers? • Penalty notice to be issued? 	
This request for term time leave is:	Authorised / Unauthorised.
Reason for decision:	
Signed: _____ Headteacher Date: _____	

Please attach the letter that you sent to the parents along with any other information from the parent regarding the original request.