



Christ Church Hanham C of E VC Primary School

Nurture with love ~ Grow through knowledge and wisdom ~ Flourish in hope



School & College Member

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Headteacher: Mr. Neil McKellar-Turner

Wednesday 26 March 2025

Attendance and Absence Reporting

Dear Families,

As a Church of England school, everything we do is rooted in our vision and values. This is so we can provide the best possible education for each child but, more than that, CCH is about nurturing every individual so that they can flourish as an amazing human being.

Central to all that we do at school is relationships. Building strong, trusting and respectful relationships is something we are proud of with our children but also our families and wider community. We teach our children to see the value of honesty and respect and the importance of this in building trust.

Sadly, over the recent weeks, we have reason to believe that some families are choosing not to be honest when it comes to reporting the reasons for their child's absence. The law on attendance is clear- children are not permitted to be absent during term time unless they are ill. This is not our rule but that set nationally by the Department for Education. We have developed a clear and robust attendance procedure in school, in line with the DfE's expectations. Our approach starts with support- an approach where we will seek to explore patterns of absence and engage with families to understand if there are any barriers to a child attending school regularly. This is because we care about each of our children and know that the research shows that regular attendance in school is key to achievement.

However, we also know that regardless of the rules, families will sometimes choose to take their child out of school during term time. Again, as a church school, we understand this will happen. Where it does, we talk openly to families about this and, sometimes this may lead to a more formal attendance meeting or even a Penalty Notice. In all circumstances, we are honest and transparent as we believe that is the only way to be. Furthermore, this is what we want to instil in all of our children.

It really saddens us, therefore, to find out that some absences are being reported to us as illness yet we have evidence to show that the absence was due to a family holiday, sporting tour or special trip. A lack of honesty and transparency is first of all a safeguarding matter. Attendance registers are required by law and need to be accurate. Schools have a duty to know the whereabouts of all children during term time. Secondly, a lack of honesty about absence is really unfair on the children as it puts them in an awkward position with their friends and teachers when they return to school. Putting a child in this situation risks undermining what we teach about truthfulness and honesty. Furthermore, we also know the pressures on children in today's world and the increase in mental health needs. I am sure we can all agree that a child having to pretend or fabricate a reason for absence and maintain this story in school is an unwanted additional pressure?

Where we have reason to believe that an absence has been reported with a false reason, we will contact families and challenge this. Again, this is our legal duty but also because we value honesty and respect. Sometimes honesty is a difficult conversation but schools are mandated to follow the legal attendance expectations. Nothing we do is about being personal or trying to get families into trouble; we are merely

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upholding the expectations set out for schools and engaging with all of our families to ensure everyone understands this. As I have said, we always try to do this in a supportive capacity.

I have raised this issue with our governors and they will be writing to families shortly to emphasise the importance of ensuring that we all value honest and respect especially when it comes to matters of safeguarding and attendance. We also know that the vast majority of families report absence accurately and accept that the decision to not authorise absence is out of our hands. We too value this honesty and understanding. Moving forward, we hope that everyone connected to CCH can continue to model and live by the values that underpin the work we do here so that our children always see our values being lived out.

Thank you for your support and understanding.

Yours faithfully,

Neil McKellar-Turner
Headteacher