



The Federation of the Church Schools of Shalfleet and Freshwater & Yarmouth

Together for a Brighter Future

27th February 2026

Dear Parents and Carers,

We are writing to update you on important national changes to school attendance expectations under the new Ofsted Framework and the Department for Education's guidance *Working Together to Improve School Attendance*. These changes strengthen the responsibility of schools, parents, and local authorities to work together to ensure that every child attends school regularly and benefits fully from their education.

Why attendance matters

Regular attendance is essential for children's learning, wellbeing, and long-term outcomes. Even small amounts of absence can disrupt progress, affect confidence, and make it harder for children to stay connected socially and academically. Our aim is to support every child to attend school consistently so they can thrive.

How the school will monitor attendance

Under the updated guidance, schools must monitor attendance more closely and respond earlier when patterns of absence begin to emerge. This means we will:

- Review attendance daily and identify any concerning patterns.
- Contact parents promptly when attendance falls below expected levels.
- Offer early support, including meetings, pastoral input, and personalised plans.
- Work with external agencies when needed to remove barriers to attendance.

This process is not about blame or punishment. It is about understanding each child's circumstances and working together to find solutions.

The attendance improvement process

Where a child's attendance begins to decline, the school is required to follow a structured improvement pathway:

1. **Early identification** — noticing patterns such as frequent absences, broken weeks, or persistent lateness.
2. **Initial contact** — a conversation with parents to understand the reasons and offer support.
3. **Support plan** — a personalised plan that may include pastoral support, reasonable adjustments, or referrals to external services.
4. **Review meetings** — regular check-ins to monitor progress and adapt support.
5. **Escalation** — if attendance does not improve despite support, the school must involve the Local Authority.

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purpose is to educate children in an atmosphere of Christian love where all achieve the very best
they can, now and throughout their lives.



A University of Chichester
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Throughout this process, our approach remains child-focused, inclusive, and supportive. We recognise that every family's situation is unique, and we are committed to working with you to overcome any barriers.

How fines work

If attendance does not improve and absences remain unauthorised, the Local Authority may issue a **Fixed Penalty Notice**. This is not a school decision; it is a legal requirement. Current national guidance states:

- A fine may be issued when a child has **10 or more unauthorised sessions** (5 days) within a set period.
- The fine is **£60 per parent, per child** if paid within 21 days, rising to **£120** if paid within 28 days.
- If the fine is not paid, the matter may proceed to prosecution.

Our aim is always to avoid fines by working collaboratively with families at the earliest stage.

Exceptional Circumstances

A leave of absence can only be authorised in exceptional circumstances, which the Department for Education defines as rare, unavoidable, and significant events that are genuinely beyond a family's control. Current guidance makes clear that family holidays, travel for convenience, or trips based on cost or availability are not considered exceptional. Examples that may meet the threshold include the funeral of an immediate family member, a serious or critical family emergency, a one-off life event such as the wedding of a close relative, or a housing crisis that temporarily prevents attendance. These situations must be one-off, time-specific, and supported by evidence, and the headteacher must be satisfied that the circumstances are truly exceptional before authorising any absence.

Our commitment

We want every child to feel safe, included, and supported in school. Attendance is a shared responsibility, and we are here to help. If you are experiencing difficulties that may affect your child's attendance, please contact us so we can work together to find the right support.

Thank you for your continued partnership.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs E Grainger
Headteacher

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