



## ATTENDANCE POLICY

July 2023

Signed: ..... Chair of Governors  
..... Headteacher

Next review: January 2025



**Chesterton CE Primary School**  
Respect Compassion Resilience Hope Integrity Humility

# **WHOLE SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY**

## **Introduction**

Chesterton is committed to providing a full and efficient education to all pupils and embraces the concept of equal opportunities for all.

We will endeavour to provide an environment where all pupils feel valued and welcome.

For a child to reach their full educational achievement, a high level of school attendance is essential. We will consistently aim for a goal of 100% attendance for each pupil. Every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and their parents or carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance including newsletters and end of term reports.

School attendance is subject to various Education laws and this school attendance policy is written to reflect these laws and the guidance produced by the Department for Education (DfE).

Each year, the school will examine its attendance figures and set attendance/absence targets. These will reflect both national and Oxfordshire attendance targets.

The school will review its systems for improving attendance at regular intervals to ensure that it is achieving its set goals.

This policy will contain within it, the procedures that the school will use to meet its attendance targets.

## **School Procedures**

1. Any child who is absent from school at the morning or afternoon registration period must have their absence recorded as being authorised, unauthorised or as an approved educational or sporting activity or visit.
2. Only the Headteacher or a member of staff acting on their behalf can authorise absence. If there is no known reason for the absence at registration, then the absence must be recorded in the first instance as unauthorised.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority (County Attendance Team) using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- truancy before or during the school day
- absences which have never been properly explained
- children who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed
- excessive illness without medical evidence

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend, never cover up their

absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually make things worse.

You can support your child by:

- Ensuring regular and early bedtimes
- Helping with homework
- Having uniform and equipment prepared the night before
- Providing a healthy breakfast
- Reporting any academic or social concerns promptly
- Retaining open & honest communication with your child's school
- Being positive about school (even if your own experience was less than positive)
- Encouraging your child to invite friends home for play dates

### **Lateness**

1. Morning registration will take place at the start of school at **8.45 am**. The registers will remain open for ***no longer than 10 minutes***.
2. Any pupil arriving after this time will be marked as having an unauthorised absence (U) unless there is an acceptable explanation (i.e. school transport was delayed.)
3. In cases where the absence at registration was for attending an early morning medical appointment, the appropriate absence code will be entered.

The afternoon registration will be at **1.10pm**

The registers will close at **1.15pm**.

4. Pupils arriving after the start of school but before the end of the registration period will be treated for statistical purposes, as present, but will be coded as late (L) before registers close.
5. Parents/Carers must inform the school if their child is going to be absent on or before the first day. If no notification has been received, the school will attempt to contact the parent/guardian by telephone to ascertain the child's whereabouts. If it is not possible to contact the parent, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. If this is the case, the school office will contact parents/guardians in writing to establish the reason for absence. The school may, at the headteacher's discretion, record the absence as authorised if an acceptable reason is subsequently given. In some circumstances, if it is not possible to make contact with a parent/carer on the day to ascertain the reason for a pupil's absence, the school may contact Social Services or another relevant agency.
6. When making medical/dental appointments, every effort must be made to ensure appointments are outside school hours, but we acknowledge that this is not always possible. It may be necessary to ask for an appointment card or other written confirmation.
7. In the case of contact

### **Absence from School**

- **First Day Absence**

*Parents are required to contact the school by telephone or in person as soon as possible after 8:30am to notify the reason for absence.*

*If the class teacher has marked a child as absent and no notification has been received, a member of the office staff will attempt to contact parents/guardians using details held on the school database, as soon as possible after the registers have closed. Where possible, a message/messages will be left requesting to contact the school and these follow-up calls are recorded on a non-attendance register.*

*If we have not had contact from the parents and / or we have concerns about the child, we may visit the home to ascertain their whereabouts and the reason for their absence.*

Reasons for absence will be recorded on the non-attendance register and via our computerised system.

If absence is due to certain illnesses, office staff will advise parents/guardians regarding the minimum length of absence (eg. 48 hours for vomiting). In some cases of extended absence, parents may not have to telephone on a daily basis and can provide an update after an agreed period of time.

In the case of certain contagious illnesses/conditions, the school may choose to notify other parents in the affected year groups/key stages by means of a short letter and/or via e-mail.

- **Continuing Absence**

If a child is absent for an extended period we may:

- visit you at home if we have not heard from you, or we are not satisfied with the explanation for absence;
- invite you in to discuss the situation with our Headteacher, Assistant Head or HSLW (Home School Link Worker) if absences persist;

If a child is absent for an extended period and it has not been possible to make contact in any of the usual ways, the school will involve external agencies to establish the whereabouts/safety of the child/children involved. ***Please also see Appendix: Children Missing Education Policy***

- **Ten Day Absence**

As required by law, any pupil who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days will be referred to Oxfordshire County Council Attendance Team. The school will include details of the action they have taken.

### **Absence Notes**

Written absence notes may be requested from parents in the event of extended/concerning absence and will be kept for the remainder of the child's time at Chesterton.

### **Frequent Absence**

It is the responsibility of the Headteacher to be aware of and bring attention to, any emerging attendance concerns.

In cases where a pupil begins to develop a pattern of absences, the school will try to resolve any concerns with the parent/s. The Headteacher (or nominated member of staff) will liaise with the Attendance and Engagement Officer to ensure necessary action is taken when incidents of poor attendance and/or punctuality are identified.

Where incidents of poor attendance and/or lateness are identified through monitoring, parents/carers will be notified in writing that this is a cause for concern. If this continues, the school will invite parents/carers in to discuss causes and ways forward.

## **Penalty Notices and Legal Action**

### **The Law**

The Education Act 1996 Part 1, Section 7 states:

The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable-

[a] To his age, ability and aptitude and

[b] To any special needs he may have.

either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

For educational purposes, the term parent is used to include those that have parental responsibility and/or those that have the day to day care of the child.

The legislation that appertains to children who are of compulsory school age and are registered at school is contained within this Act.

Part V1 Section 444 contains the details of when an offence is committed if a child fails to attend school.

In cases of persistent absenteeism, the school reserves the right to ask the Attendance and Engagement Team to either issue a Penalty Notice Warning which could result in a fine or further legal action through the courts.

A Penalty Notice is a fine that the County Attendance Team may decide to issue instead of taking legal action through the Magistrates' Court system.

A Parent/Carer can be issued with a penalty notice if:

- they fail to ensure that their child attends school, or other education provision regularly, usually defined as six or more unauthorised absence sessions over a six week period;
- they allow their child to take leave of absence during term time without the school's authorisation;
- they fail to return their child to school on the agreed date after a period of authorised leave of absence;
- their child persistently arrives late for school after registration is closed.

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' (PA) when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year **for whatever reason**. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

The school monitors all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark **or** is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and parents will be informed of this immediately.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully by the school and a parenting contract meeting will be offered between parent, pupil and school to try and help resolve any issues.

All PA cases will be referred to the County Attendance Team and if necessary, they have a range of legal powers open to them to enforce attendance including parenting orders, education supervision orders and prosecutions. If convicted of an offence a parent could face a fine of up to £2,500 per parent and/or 3 months imprisonment.

If your child becomes a PA pupil, we will seek your consent to complete an Early Help Assessment with you and consider convening a Team Around the Family.

### **A Welcome Back**

It is important that, on return from an extended absence, that all pupils are made to feel welcome. This should include endeavouring that the pupil is helped to catch up on missed work and brought up to date on any information that has been passed to other pupils.

### **Promoting Attendance**

The school will use opportunities as they arise to remind parents/carers that it is their responsibility to ensure that their children receive their education.

The Home/School agreement can be used in this way.

### **Leave of Absence / Holidays During Term Time**

The Headteacher will not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are **exceptional circumstances**. Parents/Carers should seek permission from the Headteacher prior to the leave of absence period in question.

The Headteacher will determine the number of school days a child can be away from school **if** the leave is granted. Parents/carers who remove their children from school without authorisation or do not return their child to school on the agreed date following an authorised period of leave of absence, may face a Penalty Notice Warning which could lead to a fine/prosecution (see Penalty Notices and Legal Action above).

Penalty Notices can be issued to each parent/carer concerned. Please note that it will be per parent per child. Payment within 21 days of receipt of notice is £60 and £120 if paid after this period but within 28 days. If the Penalty Notice remains unpaid after 28 days you will each receive a summons to Oxford Magistrates Court. If unauthorised leave is repeated the County Attendance Team may summons each parent to Court without a Penalty Notice being issued.

Chesterton School reserves the right to pursue penalty notices for parents who take children out of school for an unauthorised holiday when:

- The child's attendance is below 90% in the twelve-month period prior to the unauthorised holiday.  
And/or
- The absence from school is in excess of five days.

### **Attendance Awards**

The school will use the whole-school 'House Points' system to reward pupils who have good or improving attendance. 100% attendance for a period of two terms will be rewarded with a certificate, as will 100% attendance for a full academic year. The class with the highest attendance each term will receive extra break time as an incentive.

### **Register and Admission Roll keeping.**

The legal requirements regarding register and admission roll keeping can be found in The Education [Pupil Registration] (England) Regulations 2006.

- Attendance registers, by law, must be kept for at least 3 years;

### **Categorisation of Absence**

Any pupil who is on roll but not present in the school at the time of registration must be recorded within one of these categories:

- [1] Unauthorised Absence;
- [2] Authorised Absence;
- [3] Approved Educational/Sporting Activity/Visit.

#### **1. Unauthorised Absence**

This is for those pupils where no reason has been provided, or whose absence is deemed to be without a valid reason.

#### **2. Authorised Absence**

This is for those pupils who are away from school for a reason that is deemed to be valid under the Education Act 1996.

#### **3. Approved Educational Activity**

This covers types of supervised educational activity undertaken off site but with the approval of the school. This would include:

- Field trips and educational visits;
- Sporting activities;
- Link courses or approved education off site;
- Most types of dual registration.

**Note: Pupils recorded in this category are deemed to be present for attendance returns purposes.**