



ATTENDANCE POLICY

September 2024

Signed: Chair of Governors

..... Headteacher

Next review: September 2026



WHOLE SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY

Introduction

Chesterton CE Primary School provides an environment where each individual is valued, has the opportunity to grow, and contributes to the world around them.

For children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and every child should be at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. This contributes to '***Building Firm Foundations for Life***', our school vision, as good attendance at school not only benefits the children's education in the short term, but also sets them up well for future education and the world of work beyond.

Any absence from school affects the pattern of a child's education and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and their parents or carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance, including newsletters and reports.

It is very important therefore that parents/carers make sure that their child attends regularly and this Policy sets out how, together, Chesterton Primary School will achieve this.

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

Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is the legal responsibility of parents and carers, and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

This policy works to meet the mandatory requirements laid out in [Working together to improve school attendance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance)

Promoting Regular Attendance

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, pupils and all members of school staff.

To support this, we will:

- Give you details on attendance in newsletter communication;
- Report to you at Parents' Evenings and at other points, as necessary, regarding your child's attendance;
- Report to you regarding your child's lateness when necessary.

- Celebrate good attendance, through individual House Points, inter-House competition and inter-class competition. 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.
- Provide Home School Link Worker support for pupils/families struggling to attend school regularly.
- Work to provide solutions for pupils at risk of absence, for whatever reason, including but not exclusive to, offering Breakfast Club support and other 'soft landings', home visits and transport issues.
- Ask all families to sign a Home/School Agreement which includes content regarding good school attendance.

Understanding types of absence

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause. If this occurs, school may require evidence of the appointment to be able to authorise the absence.

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 late, after the register has closed, and are therefore given an unauthorised absence mark
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed
- excessive illness or medical appointments without medical evidence

Whilst any child may need to be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best resolved between the school, the parents/carers and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend school, 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
- 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)
- Helping with homework

We also aim to support good attendance through rigorous and consistent school procedures and systems.

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.
3. Parents/Carers must inform the school if their child is going to be absent on or before registration on 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.
4. 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.

Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child is not present at the start of the day, they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons; it can be embarrassing for the child which can therefore also encourage absence.

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.

Absence from School

First Day Absence

Parents are required to contact the school by telephone, via the office answerphone, via the office email, 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 (e.g. 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 Communication

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

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.

Frequent and/or Persistent 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.

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 a Strengths and Needs Assessment with you and consider convening a Team Around the Family.

Severe Absenteeism (SA)

A pupil becomes a 'severe absentee' when they miss 50% or more schooling across the school year **for any reason**. Absence at this level is doing significant damage to any child's academic and social progress which can have lifelong consequences. All SA pupils at our school will have an Individual Attendance Plan/Contract which will incorporate multi-agency input. You will be expected to engage with all partners to improve your child's attendance.

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.

Authorised 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.

There is **no** automatic entitlement in law for time off during term time to go on holiday and the school may request for a Penalty Notice to be issued.

1. Early poor attendance habits follow through into secondary school, further education and employment.
2. All schools in Oxfordshire are encouraged to adopt a policy of not authorising requests for holidays.

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).

The Penalty is £80 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, increasing to £160 if paid between day 21 and day 28. This amount is prescribed by the Education Penalty Notices (England) Regulations 2007. Failure to pay a Penalty Notice within the prescribed period may result in prosecution for the underlying offence of failure to secure regular school attendance.

Any second penalty notice issued to the same parent for the same child within a rolling 3-year period will be charged at a higher rate of £160 with no option for this second offence to be discharged at the lower rate of £80. (The three-year period begins from the date of the first penalty notice issued on or after 19 August 2024)

**Please note: Penalty Notices are issued per parent/per child.*

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.

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.*

The County Attendance Team

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the County Attendance Team at Oxfordshire County Council for further support, or consideration of legal proceedings.

At the school's request, they may issue a Penalty Notice per parent/carer, Or take action via a Non-Attendance referral, the legislation is the Education Act 1996 sec. 444(1) and 444(1A).

The County Attendance Team, with the school, will encourage you to engage with a Strengths and Needs form. Education Supervision Orders may be discussed with you to support rapidly improved attendance.

Parents that have previously been issued with Penalty Notices for their children's unauthorised absences, in the event of further unauthorised absences may receive summonses to Court.

Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact the County Attendance Team themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is 01865 323513
attendance@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Those people responsible for attendance matters in this school are:

Mr I. Horner, Headteacher

Miss D. Norman, Home School Link Worker

Mrs S. Morey and Ms F. Wolfenden, Governors with responsibility for attendance



“Building Firm Foundations For Life”