



Chesterton Primary School Attendance Policy



Introduction

We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is the development of positive attitudes towards school. To this end we strive to make our school a happy and rewarding experience for all children. We expect all children on roll to attend every day, when the school is in session, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so.

Under the *Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1995* the governing body is responsible for making sure the school keeps an attendance register that records which pupils are present at the start of both the morning and the afternoon sessions of the school day. This register will also indicate the reason for an absence and whether it was authorised or unauthorised.

1 Definitions

1.1 Authorised absence

An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent/carers, for example if a child has been unwell and the parent telephones the school to explain the absence. Only the school can authorise an absence. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised.

1.2 Unauthorised absence

An absence is classified as **unauthorised** when a child is away from school without the permission of both the school and a parent. Therefore the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent. This includes children who arrive after 9.15 am, when registers are closed. These absences will affect the child's overall attendance record which is monitored by the Education Welfare Service and remains on their school file.

1.3 Lateness

School starts at 8.40am. At this time children must be in their classroom, ready for registration. Children may enter their classrooms, via the designated classroom doors, from 8.40am.

It is important to be on time as the first few minutes of the school day are often used to give out instructions or organise school work for the rest of the day. If a child misses this short but vital session, their work for the whole day may be affected. Late arrivals are disruptive to the whole class and often embarrassing for the child. We take the view there are no late children, only late parents.

Parents who arrive after the gates and classroom doors are closed must bring their child into school through the Community Entrance, where a member of SLT (Senior Leadership Team) will be monitoring late arrivals. Parents must sign their child's name in the late book, giving a reason for the lateness. The child will be marked as 'L' (late) in the register. Parents may be invited to make an appointment with a member of SLT to discuss concerns regarding lateness in more detail.

Children who arrive **after** 9.00 am must be brought into school by their accompanying parent via the school office. Parents must sign in via the touch screen in the Reception area, giving a valid reason for the lateness. Lateness after 9.00am will be marked as 'U' (unauthorised absence) and will count towards the child's overall attendance record.

Late mark data is monitored weekly by the school and discussed with our Education Welfare Officer. In the case of repeated lateness (3 or more times in one week or a regular pattern of late arrivals over a half term), a letter will be sent home; parents will be asked to attend a meeting to discuss the reasons for this.

2 What happens when a child is absent

- 2.1** When a child is absent, the class teacher will record the absence in the register, using the appropriate code, or, if the reason has not yet been established, recording 'N'. At 9.00 am each morning, the office will check the class registers and begin contacting parents/carers of any child who is absent but whose absence has not been reported by that parent/carer. Calls to parents/carers will be made by 10.15am.
- 2.2** On the first day of a child's absence, parents are asked to contact the office to give the reason for the absence and to contact the office as early as possible on each subsequent day of absence.
- 2.3** If a child has a medical or other necessary appointment, parents should contact the office prior to the day of absence. If a child is absent due to illness for longer than 3 school days medical evidence may be requested.
- 2.4** If there is any doubt about the whereabouts of a child, the class teacher should take immediate action by notifying the school office. The office will then be in contact as soon as possible with the parent or guardian, in order to check on the safety of the child. If no contact is made with the parent/carer and there are concerns about the child's well-being, a home visit may take place or contact made with outside agencies.

3 Requests for exceptional leave of absence

- 3.1** We believe that children need to be in school for all sessions, so that they can make the most progress possible. It is recognised that some parents may persist in taking their children out of school for the purposes of a family holiday regardless of the view and response of their child's school. A child does not have a 'right' or 'entitlement' to term-time leave for the purposes of a family holiday. The school will not, as a rule, agree to leave of absence during term time.
- 3.2** However, we understand that there are circumstances where a parent may request leave of absence for 'Exceptional Leave of absence'. An email/letter request must be made to the Head Teacher at least one week before the first day of requested absence. This does not guarantee that the absence will be granted. (Exceptional Circumstances see Appendix 1).
- 3.3** If the school does not agree to the exceptional leave request and a child is still taken out of school, the absence will be unauthorised and will affect the child's overall attendance record. This absence will then be referred to the Education Welfare Officer and it may result in a Penalty Notice being issued.

*The more time a child misses from school, the more difficult it is for them to catch up with their work. Valuable learning time is lost. A **good** understanding of the work can only take place when the pupil is in the classroom.*

Fixed Penalty Fines or Prosecution

The fine for a Penalty Notice is £60 per parent, per child, if paid within 21 days. The fine rises to £120 per parent per child if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. If a Penalty Notice remains unpaid after 28 days, parents may be the subject of court proceedings for failing to ensure the regular school attendance of their child(ren), which could result in a fine of up to £2,500 and/or a term of imprisonment of up to 3 months (per parent). The tariff for these fines is set by the Local Authority.

If a family have had previous penalty notices issued or attendance has been an ongoing issue with no improvement the Local Authority may issue a request for a prosecution

Suspected Holiday Protocol

If a child is absent from school and the school have grounds to suspect the child has gone on holiday a Suspected Holiday Letter will be issued. This letter will ask parents to provide evidence that the child was not on holiday within 5 days of receipt. If no evidence is forthcoming a request for a penalty notice will be sent to the local authority.

4 Repeated unauthorised absences

4.1 The school has adopted the protocol recommendation by Cambridgeshire County Council that we want all children to achieve 96%+ attendance.

If attendance falls below **96%** parent(s) or carer will be sent a **Letter 1**, accompanied by the Education Welfare 'School Attendance' Leaflet and a copy of the child's attendance record. The letter reminds parents/carers about the importance of regular school attendance. The letter also points out that regular attendance is a legal requirement.

4.2 If attendance does not improve over the following 4 week period and falls below 92% from the date of the letter, **the Attendance officer will instigate a phone call to parents/carers** to discuss the issues concerning attendance and identify any possible solutions. There will then be a monitoring period of a further four weeks to ensure there is an improvement in school attendance. A target of 95% attendance over the following 4 weeks will be set and medical evidence will be required for any further absences e.g. an appointment card from the Doctor or a copy of the medication prescribed.

4.3 If there is no improvement in attendance/lateness and attendance falls to 89%, this will then require the parent/carers to attend a meeting at school with the Head teacher and Attendance officer to discuss concerns and, working with the parent/carers, set targets to help improve the attendance and or lateness of the pupil(s).

4.4 Should the pupil's attendance still fail to improve after attendance targets have been set, or should it fall to a lower level, then the case at this point can be formally referred to the **Education Welfare Officer** which could result in a Penalty Notice or legal proceedings may be incurred?

Should the pupil have been absent for three continuous days without a satisfactory explanation having been received, or should there be child protection or other immediate welfare concerns; Then the school may of course make an earlier referral to the Education Welfare Officer.

5 Attendance monitoring

5.1 Chesterton Primary monitors attendance carefully and considers the attendance figures for other similar schools when setting their own priorities for the coming year.

5.2 The Head Teacher with responsibility for attendance and attendance officer monitor the attendance of children whose attendance is falling below the 96% threshold due to unauthorised absences or a pattern of regular authorised absences and implement strategies to enable attendance to improve.

5.3 Through letters, the school website and consultation evenings, parents/carers are reminded about their responsibility to ensure their children attend school regularly and the consequences of poor attendance.

5.4 Parents will be encouraged to understand the full implications for both their children's academic progress and their social groupings when they miss school.

5.5 Class teachers are responsible for monitoring attendance in their class, and for bringing any concerns to the attention of the Attendance Officer. If there is concern about a child's absence, they will contact the school office

immediately. If there is a longer-term general worry about the attendance of a particular child, this will be reported to the Head Teacher, who will contact the parents or carer.

5.6 The EWO monitors attendance regularly and meetings are arranged/letters sent home as appropriate to encourage good attendance and remind parents/carers of the effects of low attendance.

6 Reviewing attendance

6.1 It is the responsibility of the governors to monitor overall attendance. The Governing Body also has the responsibility for this policy, and for seeing that it is carried out. The governors will therefore examine closely the information provided to them, and seek to ensure that the school attendance figures are as high as they should be. The responsibility to authorise requests for absence has been delegated to the Head Teacher. Letters will be sent to all parents who request absence and the seriousness of unauthorised absence will be clearly explained.

6.2 The school will keep accurate attendance records.

6.3 A termly attendance report for governors and SLT will be compiled by the Attendance Officer, This will include numbers of and reasons for authorised and unauthorised absences; attendance figures for year groups and key groups with analysis of those figures and actions/review of actions for improving attendance in subsequent terms.

Guidance for Parents

Parents do not have any right or entitlement to take their child out of school for a term time holiday. Recent government guidelines have removed the discretion on head teachers agreeing to term time leave. Any requests for leave of absence need to be submitted before the leave is taken.

1. The decision to authorise absence is at the head teachers discretion based on their assessment of the situation. Circumstances vary from school to school and so there can be no absolute rules on the subject.
2. Term times are for education. This is priority. Children and families have 175 days off school to spend together, including weekends and school holidays. Heads will rightly prioritise attendance. The default school policy will be that absences will not be granted during term time and will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances.
3. If an event can reasonably be scheduled outside of term time then it would not be normal to authorise absence.
4. Absence during term time for holidays is therefore not considered an exceptional circumstance.
5. Absences to visit family members are also not granted during term time as these could be scheduled for holiday periods or outside school hours.
6. Absence for a bereavement of a 'close' family member is usually considered an exceptional circumstance but for the funeral service only, not extended leave.
7. Absence for important religious observances are often taken into account but only for the ceremony, not extended leave. This is intended for one off situations rather than regular or recurring events.
8. Families may need time together to recover from a trauma or crisis.
9. Unavoidable medical or dental appointments (where possible these should be arranged for after or during school holidays).

Penalty Notice

The fine for a Penalty Notice is £60 per child, per parent, increasing to £120 if not paid after 21 days but within 28 days. If a Penalty notice remains unpaid, parents may be the subject of court proceedings for failing to ensure the regular school attendance of their child (ren) which could result in the fine of up to £2,500 and/or a term of imprisonment of up to 3 months per parent.

Parents who take unauthorised leave during term time or whose child has a pattern of unauthorised absence over any 4 week period could be subject to the issue of a Penalty Notice.