



Chestnut Lane School Attendance Policy

In accordance with Buckinghamshire Council

This policy should be read alongside the statutory guidance: [Working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/91231/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance.pdf) ([publishing.service.gov.uk](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk))

Updated: June 2025
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Aims and objectives

Our objectives are to promote good attendance, ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled, enabling them to become emotionally resilient, confident and competent adults who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community.

We believe that improving attendance is everyone's business and that providing a calm, orderly, safe and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn is the foundation of securing good attendance. Working together to put the right support in place at the right time, in conjunction with all staff in school, parents/guardians, pupils, Buckinghamshire Council and other local partners, we aim to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships.

Regular attendance is fundamental to the future success of children. We expect pupils to be in school for every session of the school day and for every day that the school is open.

By acting early to address patterns of absence we aim to reduce absence, including persistent and severe absence.

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school.

Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [working together to improve school attendance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures. These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of [The Education Act 1996](#)
- Part 3 of [The Education Act 2002](#)
- Part 7 of [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments\)](#)
- [School Attendance \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2024](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) Regulations 2007, as amended](#)
- [The Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003](#)
- [The Education \(Information about Individual Pupils\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2024](#)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

A child is of Compulsory School Age at the beginning of the term following their 5th birthday. A child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach the age of 16.

Roles and responsibilities

Chestnut Lane School believes that excellent school attendance can only be achieved if it is viewed as a shared responsibility of the school staff, governors, parents, pupils and the wider school community.

Parents/guardians are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day, on time
- Call or email the school to report their child's absence before 9.30am on the first day of the absence. If a child is absent for more than two days another email, or call, should be made to provide an update, and advise when the child is expected to return
- Provide the school with two emergency contact numbers for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day
- Inform the school of any change in circumstances that may impact on their child's attendance
- Ask the school for help if their child is experiencing difficulties
- Proactively engage with support offered informally or formally to help their child overcome any barriers to attendance to form a positive relationship with school and acknowledge the importance of children receiving the same messages from both school and home.

The Governing Body is expected to:

- Recognise the importance of school attendance and promote it across the school's ethos and policies
- Ensure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly review attendance data, discussing and challenging trends, and helping school leaders focus efforts on the individual pupils or cohorts who need it most
- Ensure school staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Hold the Headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Requesting the issue of fixed-penalty notices, where necessary.

The Senior Attendance Champion (Headteacher) is responsible for:

- Championing and improving attendance across the school
- Setting a clear vision for improving and maintaining good attendance
- Establishing and maintaining effective systems for tackling absence and make sure they are followed by all staff
- Having a strong grasp of absence data to focus the collective efforts of the school
- Regularly monitoring and evaluating progress, including the efficacy of the school's strategies and processes
- Form positive relationships with pupils and parents, providing help and support where possible
- Communicating messages to pupils and parents
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families
- Work with other agencies to improve attendance and support pupils and their families
- Document interventions used to a standard required by the Local Authority should legal proceedings be instigated
- Where there is a lack of engagement, holding more formal conversations with parents and raising the issue of the potential need for legal intervention.

The school attendance officer (School Administrator) is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the Senior Attendance Champion / Headteacher
- Working with school staff e.g., SENCo to tackle persistent absence
- Advising the Headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices.

The class teacher is responsible for:

- Recording attendance twice a day, using the correct codes and submitting the information to the school office as soon as possible after the register is completed.

School administration/office staff are responsible for:

- Taking calls/emails from parents about absence on a day-to-day basis and recording it on the school system
- Keeping accurate and up to date records of calls and communication with parents.

Attendance expectations

It is our duty to strive for a goal of 100% attendance for all pupils. It is vital that children arrive at school, on time, every day, unless the absence is unavoidable.

We appreciate that children in Little Chestnuts and some children in reception are not of compulsory school age. However, we encourage all our families to follow our attendance policy.

Good to excellent attendance	96 – 100%
Attendance beginning to cause concern	93 – 95.9%
Attendance causing significant concern	90 – 92.9%
Poor attendance, classified as unacceptable by the Government	Below 90%

Children who are persistently late or absent soon fall behind with their learning. This can lead to gaps that impact on their social and emotional wellbeing, progress and ability to meet age-related learning experiences. For example, a child who arrives 5 minutes late every day misses nearly 16 hours of school over the school year. A child with 90% attendance across a school year will have missed 19 days of school which is approximately 4 weeks of schooling.

School processes for recording attendance and absence

We keep an electronic attendance register and place all pupils on this register.

We take our attendance registers each morning at the start of the school day and again at the beginning of the afternoon session. They mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Absent.

Pupils arriving between 8.40am and 8.50am will be marked as present. Pupils arriving between 8.50am and 9am will be marked as having arrived late (Code L).

Pupils arriving after the close of the register (9am) will be recorded as absent for the session (Code U) unless there is a justifiable reason for their absence.

If pupils arrive after 9am they must immediately report to the school office and be signed in to ensure that we can be responsible for their health and safety whilst they are in school.

The register for the afternoon session will be taken at 1pm in Early Years and 1.15pm in Key Stage 1.

We will also record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or not by using the appropriate national attendance and absence codes from regulation 10 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024
- The nature of the activity if a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment.

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 6 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Absence

Absences for compulsory school aged children can only be authorised by the school and cannot be authorised by parents. All absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation for the pupil's absence has been received.

The pupil's parent/guardian must notify the school of the reason for an unplanned absence on the first day by 9.30am, or as soon as practically possible, by calling or emailing the school office.

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised (Code I). If the school has a concern about the authenticity of the illness we may ask the pupil's parent/guardian to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/guardians will be notified of this in advance.

Planned absence

Authorised absence: valid reasons include:

- Participating in a regulated performance, e.g filming (Code C1)
- Attending a medical or dental appointment (Code M). We encourage parents/guardians to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary. Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/guardian notifies the school in advance of the appointment
- Attending an assessment / interview for admission to another educational institution (Code J1)

- Studying for a public examination (Code S)
- Non-compulsory school age pupil not required to attend school (Code X)
- Compulsory school age pupil subject to a part-time timetable (Code C2)
- Exceptional circumstances (Code C)
- Parent travelling for occupational purposes – The pupil is a mobile child and their parent(s) is travelling in the course of their trade or business and the pupil is travelling with them. A mobile child is a child of compulsory school age who has no fixed abode and whose parent(s) is engaged in a trade or business of such a nature as to require them to travel from place to place (Code T)
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart. However, in the interests of fulfilling the academic requirements of the school, it is identified as reasonable that no more than one day be designated for any individual occasion of religious observance/festival and no more than three days in total in any academic year (Code R). Absence in excess of this will be categorised as unauthorised (Code O).
- Illness (Code I).

Leave of absence: The Headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the Headteacher's discretion, including the length of time for the authorised absence.

We consider an 'exceptional circumstance' as an occurrence or event that is outside the parents/guardians planning control and where it is extremely difficult for the pupil to attend school.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and where possible, at least four weeks before the absence, and in accordance with the school's leave of absence request form accessible from the school website and school office. The Headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

All requests for leave of absence will receive a written response. The letter should state:

- The expected date of return
- That parents must contact school should any delays occur.

If the permission to take leave is not granted and the pupil is absent, the absence will be unauthorised. In such cases the school may refer the matter to Buckinghamshire Council who may issue a Fixed Penalty Notice where the child is of compulsory school age and the national threshold has been met.

Unauthorised absence: Absence will not be authorised unless parents have provided a satisfactory explanation that has been accepted as such by the school.

Examples of unsatisfactory explanations include:

- A pupil's/family member's birthday
- Shopping for uniforms
- Closure of a sibling's school for INSET (or other) purposes
- "Couldn't get up"
- Illness where the child is considered well enough to attend school
- Holidays taken without the authorisation of the Headteacher.

Procedures following unexplained absence

The school will:

- Email the pupil's parent/guardians on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. This will be followed up by a phone call if necessary. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school will seek advice from Buckinghamshire Council
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify and input the correct attendance code as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session
- Call the parent/guardian on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will seek advice from Buckinghamshire Council.

Strategies for promoting attendance

Chestnut Lane School recognises that poor attendance is often an indication of difficulties in a child's life. This may be related to problems at home and/or in school. Parents should make school aware of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and/or behaviour in school, for example; bereavement, divorce, separation, living arrangements. This will help the school identify any additional support that may be required.

Chestnut Lane School also recognises that some pupils are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance, for example, those pupils with special educational needs, those with physical or mental health needs, migrant and refugee pupils and looked after children.

The school will implement a range of strategies to support improved attendance. Strategies used will include:

- Discussion with parents and pupils
- Attendance letters sent to parents / guardians
- Referrals to support agencies
- Social / friendship support
- Reward systems
- Reduced timetables, if applicable
- Additional learning support
- Pastoral / behaviour support (see Whole School Mental Health & Wellbeing policy)
- Reintegration support packages.

Support offered to families will be child centred and planned in discussion and agreement with both parents and pupils.

Attendance data monitoring, reporting and analysing

The school will:

- Regularly inform parents of their child's attendance levels where concerns identified.
- Monitor attendance and absence data half-termly across the school and at an individual pupil level.
- Identify whether there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern. Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national

statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average and share this with the governing board.

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families.
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns.
- Where concerns are identified provide regular attendance reports to class teachers, DSLs and to facilitate discussions with pupils and families.
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies.

Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence.
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) consider to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school.
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance.
- Implement a range of strategies to support improved attendance.
- Formalise support or use legal sanctions, in conjunction with Buckinghamshire Council. For example, through using a parenting contract (a voluntary agreement between the school and the parent which can also be extended to include the child and any other agencies offering support to resolve any difficulties leading to improved attendance), engagement with social services, Education Supervision Order or consideration of attendance prosecution in the Magistrates Court.

Legal sanctions

The school must consider requesting Buckinghamshire Council issue a fine to parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age and the national threshold has been met. Fixed penalty notices are issued in accordance with the Local Authority Penalty Notice Code of Conduct [Code of conduct for issuing penalty notices for unauthorised absence from school | Buckinghamshire Council](#)

If issued with a fine or penalty notice each parent must pay £80 (per child) if paid within 21 days rising to £160 thereafter. If not paid within 28 days the Local Authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice – note there is no right of appeal in court by parents against a fixed penalty notice. The national framework for penalty notices sets out that a maximum of 2 penalty notices per child, per parent, can be issued within a rolling 3-year period (the second one being payable at £160 with no option to reduce fine by making payment earlier). If the national threshold is met for a third (or subsequent) time within 3 years, the Local Authority will consider prosecution through the magistrates' court under Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996.

In Education Law (Section 576 of the Education Act 1996) 'parent' means:

- All natural parents, whether they are married or not
- Any person who has parental responsibility for a child or pupil
- Any person who has care of a child or pupil i.e. lives with and looks after the child

Parenting Contracts: A Parenting contract is a voluntary agreement between the school and the parent, it can also be extended to include the child and any other agencies offering support to resolve any difficulties leading to improved attendance. The contract will outline attendance targets and will detail agreed actions that will help to achieve the target. The contract will be reviewed regularly. The contract can be used as evidence in a prosecution should irregular attendance continue.

Links to other policies and monitoring arrangements

Our Attendance policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is a strand that runs through all aspects of school improvement, supported by our policies on safeguarding, anti-bullying and behaviour. This policy also takes into account the Human Rights Act 1998 and the Equality Act 2010.

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum every two years by the Headteacher. At every review the policy will be approved by the full Governing Body.



Penalty Notices for School Attendance

With the introduction of the new National Framework for Penalty Notices, the following will come into force for absences that start after 19th August 2024. This is nationwide and across borders if you move school or house. **Term Time Leave is only allowed in exceptional circumstances when communicated in advance with evidence provided as soon as possible to the Headteacher.**

FIRST OFFENCE

The first Penalty Notice issued for Term Time Leave of Absence or Irregular Attendance, the amount of the fine will be £160 per parent, per child if paid within 28 days and reduced to £80 per parent, per child if paid with 21 days

SECOND OFFENCE

For the second Penalty Notice (within three years of the first offence) issued for Term Time Leave of Absence or Irregular Attendance, the amount of the fine will be £160 per parent, per child if paid within 28 days. No reduced rate will be offered

THIRD OFFENCE AND SUBSEQUENT OFFENCES

The third time an offence is committed for Term Time Leave of Absence or Irregular Attendance, a Penalty Notice will not be issued, and the case will be presented straight to the Magistrates' Court. If found guilty there could be up to a maximum fine of £2,500 or a term of imprisonment not exceeding 3 months.

**PLEASE ENSURE YOU
COMMUNICATE WITH YOUR
CHILD'S SCHOOL**

In law only the headteacher of a school can authorise a child's absence. A pupil's attendance forms part of their official school record.

Parents do not have an automatic right to remove their child from school during term time for the purpose of a leave of absence and are strongly advised not to do so.

Headteachers are unable to authorise leave of absence during term time unless they are satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances.

The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, unavoidable and short. 'Unavoidable' implies that an event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time.

10 sessions in 10 weeks

Penalty Notices will be considered for any 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in 10 weeks.

5 consecutive days of term time absence can trigger a Penalty Notice.

Do not forget that Penalty Notices are issued Per Parent, Per Child.

i.e. Two siblings absent would result in each parent receiving 2 fines. This could amount to £640.