



Chestnut Lane School

Chestnut Lane School Attendance Policy

Updated: November 2024
Next Review: November 2026

1 Introduction

Chestnut Lane School believes that regular school attendance is the key to enabling children to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and become emotionally resilient, confident and competent adults who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community.

The aim of this Attendance policy is to demonstrate how we will provide consistent practice that actively encourages and supports the highest possible levels of attendance for all our pupils. We take a whole-school approach to maintaining regular attendance and to achieve this, all members of our school community have an important contribution to make. It is vital that we work in partnership to ensure that any in-school or out-of-school barriers are removed at the earliest opportunity, this is achieved through early and meaningful support.

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.

2 Legal framework

Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act states that parents must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

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.

Under the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents secure education for children of compulsory school age and where necessary, use legal enforcement.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, require schools to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and then again during the afternoon session.

The register must record whether the pupil was:

- present;
- absent;
- present at approved educational activity; or
- unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

3 Attendance expectations

Chestnut Lane School values all pupils and we want all the children to thrive in our school every day. We build strong and enduring relationships because we believe this is the foundation pupils need to fully engage in our community, to feel a sense of belonging and succeed.

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.

4 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.

Chestnut Lane School staff will:

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to pupils and their parents
- Form positive relationships with pupils and parents, providing help and support where possible
- Contribute to a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance; with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve
- Comply with the Registration Regulations, England, 2006 and other attendance related legislation
- Implement systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site
- Analyse attendance data to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Contribute to the evaluation of school strategies and interventions
- 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.
- Remote learning will only be considered as a last resort (see Contingency Plans for Remote Learning)

Parents will:

- Talk to their child about school and what goes on there. Take a positive interest in their child's work and educational progress
- Instil the value of education and regular school attendance within the home environment
- Encourage their child to look to the future and have aspirations
- Contact the school if their child is absent to let them know the reason why and the expected date of return. Follow this up with a note when appropriate,
- Try to avoid unnecessary absences. Wherever possible make appointments for the doctors, dentists etc. outside of school hours
- Ask the school for help if their child is experiencing difficulties
- Inform the school of any change in circumstances that may impact on their child's attendance
- Support the school; take every opportunity to get involved in their child's education, form a positive relationship with school and acknowledge the importance of children receiving the same messages from both school and home

- Encourage routine at home, for example, bed times, homework, preparing school bag and uniform the evening before
- Not keep their child away from school to go shopping, to help at home or to look after other members of the family
- Avoid taking their child on holiday during term-time.

5 The school day for:

Reception and Key Stage 1

Classrooms open: 8.40am

Registration: 8.50am

End of school day: 3.05pm

Little Chestnuts

Classrooms open: 8.45am

Registration: 8.50am

End of school day: 11.45am or 3.00pm

6 Requesting and notifying the school of absence

Parents wishing to take a child out of school during term time must make a written request to the Headteacher by completing a Leave of Absence Request form, at least one month prior to the date of the proposed absence, where possible. This form is available on our website.

When a child is unwell, or unable to attend school on the day for any other reason, parents must call or email the school as soon as possible, ideally before 9.30am, on the first day of absence. Where school has not been notified of an absence contact will be made with the parents/guardians via email, followed up by telephone as necessary.

7 Categorising absence

Where pupils are recorded as absent, the register shows whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

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.

Absence will be categorised as follows:

Illness: In most cases a telephone call or email from the parent informing the school that their child is ill will be acceptable. Parents may be asked to provide medical evidence where there are repeated absences due to reported illness. This will usually be in the form of an appointment card, prescription etc.

Medical/Dental Appointments: Parents are advised where possible to make medical and dental appointments outside the school day. Where this is not possible, pupils should attend school for part of the day. Parents should show the appointment card to school.

Other Authorised Circumstances: The Headteacher will consider each request individually.

Late Arrival: Registration is at 8.50am. Pupils arriving after this time will be marked as present but having arrived late. (Code L) The register closes at 9.00am. Pupils arriving after the close of the register will be recorded as absent for the session.

If arrival is after 9.00am, pupils 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 absence will only be authorised if a satisfactory explanation for the late arrival can be provided, for example, attendance at a medical appointment. (Code M)

The absence will be recorded as **unauthorised** if the pupil has arrived late after the registers close without justifiable cause, for example, if they woke up late or were waiting for their uniform to dry. (Code U)

Leave of Absence and Extended Leave: For the Headteacher to assess a request for absence, the Leave of Absence form must be submitted (as outlined in item 6). Parents do not have an automatic right to remove their child from school during term time for the purpose of a holiday and are strongly advised not to do so. Documentary evidence of leave and return dates may be required in order to process a request.

Retrospective requests will not be considered and therefore will result in the absence being categorised as unauthorised. Each request will be considered individually and will take the following factors into account:

- Length of the proposed leave
- Age of the pupil
- The pupil's general absence/attendance record
- Proximity of statutory assessments
- Pupil's ability to catch up the work missed
- Pupil's educational needs
- General welfare of the pupil
- Circumstances of the request
- Purpose of the leave
- Previous term time leave taken
- When the request was made (adhering to the notice period).

All requests for leave of absence will receive a written response. Where a request has been granted, 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 the County Attendance Team who may issue a Penalty Notice.

Religious Observance: Chestnut Lane School acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods or weekends and that this necessitates a consideration of authorised absence or special leave for religious observance. (Code R)

It is reasonable for a parent to allow their children not to attend school on any day of religious observance if recognised by the parent's religious body.

Parents are requested to give advance notice to the school if they intend their child to be absent.

However, in the interests of fulfilling the academic requirements of the school and limiting the authorised absence rate 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. Absence in excess of this will be categorised as unauthorised.

Excluded (no alternative provision made): Exclusion from attending school is counted as an authorised absence. The child's class teacher will make arrangements for work to be sent home. Please see Whole School Behaviour policy for further information on exclusion procedures.

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
- Having their hair cut
- 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.

8 Deletions from the Register

In accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, pupils will be deleted from the register only when one of the following circumstances applies:

- The school is replaced by another school on a School Attendance Order
- The School Attendance Order is revoked by the Local Authority
- The pupil has ceased to be of compulsory school age
- Permanent exclusion has occurred and statutory procedures have been completed
- Death of a pupil
- Transfer between schools
- When a parent informs the school in writing that the pupil is to be withdrawn to be educated outside the school system (Due process must be applied with the Local Authority)
- A medical condition prevents their attendance and return to the school before ending compulsory school-age
- 20 days' continuous unauthorised absence have elapsed and both the Local Authority and school have tried to locate the pupil without success

Chestnut Lane School will follow Buckinghamshire Council's Children Missing Education Protocol when a pupil's whereabouts is unknown.

9 Using Attendance Data

All pupils' attendance will be monitored and will be shared with the Local Authority and other agencies if a pupil's attendance remains a cause for concern.

The Headteacher will review attendance data for the whole school. This pupil level data will be used to trigger school action as set out in the escalation of intervention (Appendix 1).

Attendance data will also be used to identify emerging patterns and trends to inform whole school strategies to improve attendance and attainment. Analysis of attendance data, including by groups of pupils, will be provided to the governing body termly.

Chestnut Lane School will share attendance data with the Local Authority as required. All information shared will be done so in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

10 Support Systems

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.

11 Legal Sanctions

Where intervention fails to bring about an improvement in attendance, Chestnut Lane School will notify the County Attendance Team of the irregular attendance.

The County Attendance Team or school, may invite parents to attend a Parenting Contract Meeting and issue a formal warning of a Penalty Notice.

Parenting Contracts: (Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003) A Parenting contract is a voluntary agreement between the Local Authority, 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.

Penalty Notices: (Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003) Penalty Notices will be considered when:

- Intervention has failed to bring about improvement and further unauthorised absence has occurred following written warning to improve.
- A pupil has taken leave of absence i.e. for the purpose of a holiday in term time and the absence has not been authorised by the school

A Penalty Notice gives the parent the opportunity to avoid a prosecution. A £80 fine, per parent/carer, per child must be paid within 21 days. The fine increases to £160 per parent/carer, per child if paid after 21 days but within 28 days of the date the Notice was issued.

Failure to pay the Penalty Notice may result in a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

Prosecution: The school will provide the Local Authority with evidence required for a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996. This is to ensure that parents realise their own responsibilities in ensuring attendance at school and most importantly about returning children to education.

Appendix 1

Intervention Flow Chart

School will notify parent of the child's irregular school attendance and offer them the opportunity and support to improve.

If you receive a letter informing you of concerns regarding your child's attendance you should

- Speak with your child to see if there are any reasons why they are reluctant to attend
- Contact the school to discuss any difficulties you or your child may be experiencing.
 - Ensure your child attends school regularly

If there is no improvement and the parent has not provided a good reason for the absence, the school may refer to the County Attendance Team

A Parenting Contract is a voluntary agreement between you and the Local Authority aimed at supporting you in improving your child's school attendance.

The County Attendance Team will invite you to attend a Parenting Contract Meeting and may issue a Warning of a Penalty Notice.

Whilst your involvement in a Parenting Contract is voluntary, if you fail to engage with the support offered and your child's attendance remains irregular, the County Attendance team may issue a Penalty Notice or begin legal proceedings in the Magistrates' Court.

If you are issued with a Penalty Notice of £80 per parent/carer, per child this must be paid in full within 21 days otherwise the Penalty will increase to £160 per parent/carer, per child. If you fail to pay the Penalty by the 28th day, the Education Welfare Service may instigate legal proceedings against you.

If you are found guilty of this offence you can be fined up to £2500 and/or be imprisoned for a period of three months.