

# **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

## **Cheney School**

### **Introduction:**

This is a successful school and your child plays their part in making it so. We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to reach out for excellence. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and your child should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

It is very important therefore that you make sure that your child attends regularly and this policy sets out how together we will achieve this.

### **Why Regular Attendance is so important:**

Any absence disrupts a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence also disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class.

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

### **Promoting Regular Attendance:**

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

### **To help us all to focus on this we will:**

- Give you details on attendance in our regular School Newsletter
- Report to you three times a year on how your child is performing in school including their level of attendance and punctuality
- Make individual attendance data available via the school's management information system and related parent portal
- Recognise and reward good or improving attendance.

### **Understanding types of absence:**

Every half-day absence from school is 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.

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 some other unavoidable cause. If this occurs, school will 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
- 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 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, early bedtimes and providing structured routines
- 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 school
- Being positive about school (even if your own experience was less than positive)

### **Persistent Absenteeism (PA):**

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for any reason, including Authorised absences. 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.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA threshold or is at risk of moving towards that threshold is given priority and you will be informed of this immediately.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment.

All our PA pupils and their parents are subject to an Action Plan and the plan may include allocation of additional support through a Mentor, individual incentive programmes and participation in group activities around raising attendance. All PA cases are also automatically made known to the County Attendance team. If your child becomes a PA pupil, we will consult with the County Attendance Team on where appropriate seek your consent to work with external agencies to complete an Early Help Assessment with you and consider convening a Team Around the Family.

### **Absence Procedures:**

#### **If your child is absent you must:**

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence
- Or you can call into school and report to reception, who will arrange for a member of staff to speak with you.

#### **If your child is absent, we will:**

- Telephone or text you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with our Attendance Manager and/or Pastoral Leaders, Heads of Student Progress, and/or member of the Senior Leadership Team if absences persist
- Refer the matter to the County Attendance Team if attendance moves below 90%.

### **Telephone numbers:**

There are times when we need to contact parents about lots of things, including absence, so we always need to have your current contact numbers and email addresses. So, help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up-to-date number – if we don't then something important may be missed. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

### **The County Attendance Team:**

If your child is having problems with attendance, we recommend that you contact school at an early stage and work with the staff in resolving these 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 the Local Authority. At the school's request, they may issue a Penalty Notice. The penalty notice carries a fine and each parent or carer responsible for each child that is identified as a persistent absentee. The fine is currently £60 rising to £120 if unpaid after 21 days. If unpaid after 28 days a summons to Court will be issued for each unpaid Penalty Notice for prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. This can result in a criminal record and a fine of up to £2,500, a Community Order, Parenting

Order or ultimately a custodial sentence. The legislation is the Education Act 1996 sec. 444(1) and 444(1A).

Parents or carers 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.

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

### **Lateness:**

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

### **How we manage lateness:**

The school day starts at 8:30 **a.m.** and we expect your child to be in class at that time.

Registers are marked by 8:40 **a.m.** and your child will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time.

At 10:40 **a.m.** the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that you could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

In the afternoon registers open at 1:05 p.m. and we expect your child to be in class at that time. Registers are marked by 1:15pm and your child will receive a late if they are not in class by that time.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with a member of the year team and/or Attendance Officer and/or Senior Leadership Team to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

Each day has two sessions. If your child is absent for a school day they will be marked as absent for two sessions.

## **Exceptional Leave:**

Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children away in school time. Remember that any savings you think you may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the harm done to your child's education. Each academic year Cheney School issues a warning letter informing families that they may be issued a penalty notice or prosecuted should they take holiday in term time. Oxfordshire County Council will issue a penalty notice and fine for a first offence, subsequent offences are prosecuted and carry a criminal conviction.

There is **no** automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday.

- All schools in Oxfordshire are encouraged to adopt a policy of not authorising Exceptional Leave.
- Exceptional leave is most unlikely to be authorised when a student's attendance is less than 95%.
- Exceptional leave will always be refused when school is aware of any truancy.
- Exceptional leave will always be refused when requests are regular (annual) or when patterns become identifiable.
- Reasons for Exceptional Leave will be logged on the pupil's record and shared as part of the transfer/transition process.

## **Those people responsible for attendance matters in this school are:**

Mr R Hawkswood, Attendance Manager

Mr H Nelson, Deputy Headteacher

Mr R Moreton, Head Teacher

Mr R Stamper, Governor with responsibility for attendance

## **Summary:**

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures & its attendance policy to parents and to promote attendance. School attendance data must be available to the Local Authority & the Department for Education. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend.

All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible. Regular attendance supports optimising your child's attainment.

**Date of Policy: Friday 19<sup>th</sup> July 2020**

**Date of next review: July 2022**

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I have read and understood the terms and conditions of the attendance policy at School A.

Signed:

Child's Name:

Year: