



Cheney School

Think for yourself; act for others

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Cheney School

November 2024

Senior Attendance Team Responsible for Attendance Policy:

Headteacher: Rob Pavey

Deputy Headteacher responsible for Behaviour and Attendance: Charlotte Broom

Attendance Manager: Richard Hawkswood

Designated Safeguarding Lead: Tom Haines

Reviewed: November 2023

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This policy has been agreed in consultation with the whole school community's stakeholders, including the Governing Body, to ensure that it remains fit for purpose. It seeks to ensure that all parties involved in the practicalities of school attendance are aware and informed of attendance matters in school and to outline the school's commitment to ensuring high levels of attendance across all pupils. It details the responsibilities of individuals and groups involved and the procedures in place to promote and monitor pupil attendance.

Introduction

Cheney School, as part of the River Learning Trust, recognises that positive behaviour and good attendance are essential in order to raise standards of pupil

attainment and to give every child/young person the best educational experience possible.

This policy is written with the above statement in mind and underpins our Trust's ethos:

- **Commitment to Excellence:** Striving for the best educational experience through continuous improvement.
- **Everyone Learning:** Creating and taking opportunities that enhance lives through evidenced based practice supporting adult and pupil learning.
- **Respectful Relationships:** Acting with care, integrity, and fairness in all we do.

This document aims to support a whole school system that can:

- Prevent patterns of absence from developing.
- Promote good attendance.
- Provide early intervention, by using data to spot patterns of absence before they become persistent.
- Work with families to remove the barriers to attendance.
- Target support for persistent and severe absentees, with all local partners working together to re-engage pupils.

Vision and Values

At Cheney School, we aim to:

- Develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance.
- Make attendance central to our school's vision.
- Recognise the interplay between attendance and wider improvement.
- Provide a dedicated Attendance Champion on the school's leadership team.
- Resource attendance support appropriately.
- Set high expectations for attendance and punctuality of all pupils.
- Visibly demonstrate the benefits of good attendance throughout school life.

- Continuously work to improve attendance.
- Recognising children missing education can be a vital safeguarding warning.

Roles and Responsibilities

All schools have a continuing responsibility to proactively manage and improve attendance across their school community. As set out in section 1 of Working Together to Improve School Attendance, attendance is the essential foundation to positive outcomes for all pupils and should therefore be seen as everyone's responsibility in school. The school will support pupils and parents/carers by working together to address any in-school barriers to attendance. Where barriers are outside of the school's control, all partners will work together to support pupils and parents/carers to access any support they may need voluntarily.

At Cheney School, we endeavour to treat all pupils and parents with dignity and staff model respectful relationships in order to build a positive relationship between home and school that can be the foundation of good attendance. School recognises the link between attendance and attainment and wider wellbeing. Successfully treating the root causes of absence and removing barriers to attendance, at home, in school or more broadly requires schools and local partners to work collaboratively with, not against families.

At Cheney School we have an Attendance Champion:

SLT Attendance Lead: Charlotte Broom

and a dedicated team working to support the improvement of attendance:

Attendance Manager: Richard Hawkswood

Designated Safeguarding Lead: Tom Haines

Year Group Teams

It is the role of the School Attendance Support Team at the Local Authority to rigorously track local attendance data and to devise a strategic approach to attendance that prioritises the pupils, pupil cohorts and schools on which to provide support and focus its efforts on to unblock area wide barriers to attendance.

School Attendance and the Law

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. Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school. (Working Together to Improve School Attendance, September 2022).

Only exceptional circumstances warrant a leave of absence. The school considers each application individually, taking into account the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request. If a leave of absence is granted, which must be requested in writing, it is for the headteacher to determine the length of the time the pupil can be away from school. As head teachers should only grant leaves of absence in exceptional circumstances it is unlikely a leave of absence will be granted for the purposes of a family holiday.

At Cheney School, 'exceptional circumstances' will be interpreted as:

... being of unique and significant emotional, educational or spiritual value to the child which outweighs the loss of teaching time (as determined by the headteacher). The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are events that are "rare, significant, unavoidable and short". With the term 'unavoidable' meaning an event that could not reasonably be scheduled at another time.

The school will not consider applications for leave during term time:

- At any time in September, in order for the pupil to settle into the new academic year as effectively as possible.
- During assessment and test periods in the school's calendar that would affect the individual.
- When a pupil's attendance record already includes any level of unauthorised absence or they have already been granted authorised leave within that academic year

If leave of absence is authorised, the school is not obliged to provide work for children to do during their absence.

Where absence was unauthorised and support has been provided but has not worked or been engaged with, or would not have been appropriate in the circumstances of the offence (e.g. an unauthorised holiday in term time), the Local Authority can issue fixed penalty notices. These must be in line with their code of conduct. Local Authorities will only take forward attendance prosecution as a last resort, where all other routes have been exhausted or deemed inappropriate. Schools, Trusts and Local Authorities are expected to work together and make use of the full range of legal interventions, rather than relying solely on fixed penalty notices or prosecution

Understanding Types of Absence

Every half-day absence from school must be classified by the school as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required. Each half-day is known as a 'session'

Authorised absences are morning or afternoon sessions away from school for a genuine reason, such as illness (although you may be asked to provide medical evidence for the pupil before this can be authorised), medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable causes.

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 using sanctions and/or legal proceedings which may include issuing each parent with a Penalty Notice for £120, reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days or referring the matter to the Magistrates Court whereby each parent may receive a fine up to £2500 and/or up to 3 months in prison. If you are found guilty in court the parent/carer will receive a criminal conviction.

Unauthorised absence includes, however is not exhaustive:

- parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily e.g. because they had a late night or for non-infectious illness or injury that would not affect their ability to learn.
- absences which have never been properly explained.

- children who arrive at school after the close of registration are marked using a 'U'. This indicates that they are in school for safeguarding purposes however is recorded as an absence for the session.
- shopping trips.
- looking after other children or children accompanying siblings or parents to medical appointments.
- their own or family birthdays.
- Holidays taken during term time without leave, not deemed 'for exceptional purposes' by the headteacher- may result in school applying to the Local Authority to issue a penalty notice or if you have previously been issued a Penalty Notice, the school may request a direct prosecution by the Local Authority.
- day trips.
- other leave of absence in term time which has not been agreed.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA) and Severe Absenteeism (SA). Where absence escalates and students miss 10% or more of school (equivalent to 1 day or more a fortnight across a full school year), the school and the local authority will work together to put additional targeted support in place to remove any barriers to attendance and re-engage these pupils. In doing so, the school will sensitively consider some of the reasons for absence and understand the importance of school as a place of safety and support for students who might be facing difficulties, rather than reaching immediately for punitive approaches.

Particular focus will be given to students who are absent from school more than they are present (those missing 50% or more of school). These severely absent students may find it more difficult to be in school or face bigger barriers to their regular attendance and as such are likely to need more intensive support across a range of partners. All partners will work together to make this group the top priority for support – this may include specific support with attendance or a whole family plan, but it may also include consideration for an Education, Health and Care plan or an alternative form of educational provision where necessary to overcome the barriers to being in school.

Absence Procedures

If a student is absent from school the parent/carers must follow the following procedures:

- Contact the school on the first day of absence before **9.20 am**.
- Initial contact should be made via the Cheney School Student Absence Google [Form](#).
- There is also an absence line available to leave a message, but this is less reliable than the Google Form.

Call the attendance manager Mr Hawkswood on 01865 765726 - Option 1

- It is also possible to email Mr Hawkswood: rhw@cheneyschool.org
- Contact the school on every further day of absence, again before **9.20am**
- Ensure that the student returns to school as soon as possible and any medical evidence, if requested, is provided to support the absence.

If a student is absent the school will:

- Telephone or text the parent/carer on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you, however it is your responsibility to contact us.
- Write to the parent/carer if your student's attendance is **below 95%**
- Invite you into school to discuss the situation with the Attendance Team and/or Attendance Champion, if absences persist.
- Refer the matter to the Local Authority for relevant sanctions if attendance deteriorates following the above actions.

First Day Contact: The school operates a first day response to absence: we will text or call the parent/carer if school has not received communication in regards to the absence. If the school is unable to make contact with parents/carers by telephone; emergency contacts will be sourced, followed by email communication. If contact is still not successful, letters will be sent home and a visit may be made in the interests of safeguarding. A referral will be made to the Local Authority if no contact has been made with parent/carers by the 5th consecutive day of absence, at which point the student will be considered Missing from Education.

Lateness

We encourage punctuality at all times. If a student misses the start of the day, or a lesson, this can be a deficit to their education and their emotional wellbeing. Good time-keeping is a vital life skill, which will help our students as they progress through their school life and out into the wider world.

How we manage lateness: The school day starts at 8.25am. Registers are taken at 8.30 and pupils will receive a late mark 'L' if they are not in by that time. Students arriving after 9.00am are required to come into school via the school reception. If accompanied by a parent or carer, the parent/carer will sign them into the 'Late Book' and provide a reason for their lateness which is recorded. If the student is unaccompanied, the school will inform parents/carers. The Attendance Champion may undertake regular 'Late Gate' checks.

At 9.10am the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if a student arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site 'U', but this will **not** count as a present mark and they will have an unauthorised absence. If a student has a persistent late record, school will liaise with parents/carers in order to provide targeted support to improve the situation.

Monitoring Absence

As part of Cheney School's commitment to ensuring high standards, the school regularly analyses attendance and absence data to identify students or cohorts that require support with their attendance and to put effective strategies in place. The Attendance Champion, in collaboration with staff, will:

- Ensure that the admission register is maintained and accurately recorded, in line with regulations.
- Retain registers for 3 years from date of entry.
- Only grant leaves of absence in exceptional circumstances.
- Set clear day to day processes for following up absences.
- Regularly update parents, carers on their child's attendance and absence.
- Monitor and analyse weekly attendance patterns.
- Provide regular reports to class or form teachers to facilitate discussions.
- Identify students who would benefit from additional, targeted support.

- Conduct thorough analysis of half-termly, termly and full year attendance data.
- Benchmark attendance data against local, regional and national levels.
- Devise improvement strategies, based upon the data.
- Monitor the impact of improvement work to recognise areas of success and development.

Supporting Families to Improve Attendance

Successfully treating the root causes of absence and removing barriers to attendance, at home, in school or more broadly requires schools and local partners to work collaboratively with, not against families. All partners should work together to:

- Build strong relationships.
- Listen to and understand barriers to attendance and work with families to remove them.
- Support students and parents/carers to address any in-school barriers.
- Work with the Local Authority and other local partners to support families with out of school barriers.
- Intensify support where absence does not improve or earlier support is not engaged with.

Training

We ensure school staff receive adequate training on attendance. Training on attendance is included in the school's continued professional development offer for all staff, and attendance information is included upon induction. All staff have an understanding of:

- The importance of good attendance and that absence is almost always a symptom of wider circumstances.
- The law and requirements of schools, including on the keeping of registers
- The schools' strategies and procedures for tracking, following up and improving attendance
- The processes for working with other partners to provide more intensive support to pupils who need it.

Dedicated attendance training is provided to any staff with a specified attendance function in their role, including administrative, pastoral or family support staff and senior leaders. This includes the necessary skills to interpret and analyse attendance data and advice on supporting pupils and pupil cohorts to overcome commonly seen barriers to attendance.

Promoting Attendance

We maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance. (Under the Equality Act 2010, we recognise the attendance achievements of pupils who suffer with diagnosed conditions that sometimes prevent them from attending school on a full-time basis). As a school, we do this through a variety of rewards and celebrations:

- Awarding of house points for 100% attendance in a term
- Awarding of house points for 100% attendance in a year
- Celebrations in assembly
- Praise from key staff

Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions or Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

At Cheney School we strive to work with families and students in order for them to attend school successfully. As a result, the Senior Attendance Team aims to:

- Deliver a sensitive approach to individual circumstances.
- Develop good support for pupils with physical or mental health conditions.
- Provide specific support for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities.
- Establish strategies to remove in school barriers for pupils who have a medical condition or a SEND.
- Ensure joined-up pastoral care is in place.
- Consider whether a time limited phased return would be appropriate.
- Ensure regular data monitoring of the situation.

(Please see the Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions and the SEND Policy for further information).

Part-time Timetables

All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. In very exceptional circumstances, where it is in a student's best interests, there may be a need for a temporary part-time timetable to meet their individual needs. For example, where a medical condition prevents a pupil from attending full-time education and a part-time timetable is considered as part of a re-integration package. If this was deemed necessary, formal arrangements would be in place for regularly reviewing it with the pupil and their parents/carers. In agreeing to a part-time timetable, the school has agreed to a pupil being absent from school for part of the week or day and, therefore, this would be treated as an authorised absence.

Deletion from Roll

For any pupil leaving Cheney School, other than at the end of year 11, parents/carers are required to notify the school, in writing, of this decision. This must include the following information: Student's name, class, current address, date of leaving, new home address, name of new school, address of new school. This information is essential to ensure that we know and safeguard the whereabouts of all of our pupils.

It is crucial that parents keep school updated with current addresses and contact details for key family members in case of emergency.

Under Pupil Regulations 2006, all schools are legally required to notify their Local Authority of every new entry to the admission register within five days of the pupil being enrolled. In addition to this, every deletion from the school register must also be notified to the Local Authority, as soon as the ground for deletion has been met in relation to that pupil, and in any event no later than the time at which the student's name is deleted from the register. This duty does not apply when a student's name is removed from the admission register at a standard transition point – when the student has completed the final year of education normally provided by that school.

In Summary

In relation to attendance, all partners should work together to:

MONITOR - Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.

EXPECT - Aspire to high standards of attendance from all students and parents/carers and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.

LISTEN AND UNDERSTAND - When a pattern is spotted, discuss with students and parents/carers to listen to understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.

FACILITATE SUPPORT - Remove barriers in school and help students and parents/carers to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.

FORMALISE SUPPORT - Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through a parenting contract or education supervision order.

ENFORCE - Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.