Chesham Preparatory School

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Note: This policy applies to the Early Years Foundation Stage as well as to the whole school.

The importance of attendance

Chesham Preparatory School aims to work together with parents to ensure that all children registered at the School attend every day and on time, unless absence is unavoidable, eg chronic health issues, exceptional circumstances.

Regular attendance at school is vital. Without it, the learning process becomes fragmented and unsatisfactory; put simply: absence means missed learning and potentially reduced attainment. It is a legal requirement that pupils of compulsory school age (term after child turns five) receive full-time education. A pupil whose attendance drops to 90% (unexplained and/or persistent absence) each year will, over their time at primary school, have missed the equivalent of two whole terms of learning.

Staff and governors take the issue of attendance very seriously and will do all possible to consistently work towards a high level of attendance for all of our pupils. All members of the school staff have a safeguarding responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and lateness; with the Senior Attendance Champion having overall responsibility for the monitoring of attendance and lateness of every pupil.

Mr James Bateson (Deputy Head) is the Senior Attendance Champion.

Aims of this policy

This policy aims to:

- support pupils and their parents in the establishment of the highest possible levels of attendance and punctuality.
- ensure that all pupils have full and equal access to the best education that we can offer in order to increase learning.
- enable pupils to progress smoothly, confidently and with continuity through the School.
- ensure parents are aware of their legal responsibility to ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually, as stated under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

Registration

The School will ensure that registers are taken twice daily and recorded electronically on the school iSAMS system, using the approved attendance codes in Appendix 1.

Pupils are registered electronically at the start of the school morning (08.30) and at the start of the school afternoon (12.45/13.15 dependent on year group).

The register will remain 'open' for 15 minutes from these times, during which, if a pupil arrives 'late' they will be marked as present for the session but by using the 'L' code.

Any pupil who arrives after the register has 'closed', will be marked as 'U' for the session.

Attendance and absence of pupils of compulsory and non-compulsory school age will be recorded using the appropriate national attendance and absence codes.

Parents are expected to:

- ensure their child arrives on time for registration.
- inform the School Office by using the Absence form found on the School Portal or by email to office@cheshamprep.co.uk (copying in the form teacher), by 08.30 on each morning of a child's absence. It is not sufficient to inform just the class teacher.
- inform the School of any illness. Parents may on occasion be asked to provide evidence in relation to the absence in order for the absence to be authorised. In situations where a recurring illness/medical need significantly affects attendance and access to education across the academic year, parents will be invited to meet with the Headteacher to discuss the situation and the implementation of possible support strategies.
- inform the School of any medical appointments during school time using the Leave Request form found on the School Portal or by email to office@cheshamprep.co.uk (copying in the form teacher). Parents may on occasion be asked to provide evidence in relation to the absence in order for the absence to be authorised. An am/pm session could be unauthorised if a pupil is absent for a longer period than the appointment warrants.
- inform the School of any other reason for absence.
- inform the School of any reluctance to come to school so that any problems can be quickly identified and dealt with.

Unexplained absence

In cases where a child's absence is unexplained, the School has a safeguarding responsibility and once the registers have closed, the school office staff will telephone every contact, starting with priority 1, until a reason for the absence is known. Voicemail messages, text messages and emails will be left, requesting parents to contact the School regarding their child(ren)'s absence.

Once the reason for absence has been confirmed, the register will be updated to reflect this. Where no response to an enquiry regarding a child's absence is received, the absence will be considered unexplained and will be recorded as unauthorised. Parents will be further contacted to discuss the reason for absence.

Authorised absences

Authorised absence means that the School has either given approval in advance for a pupil to be away (granted an authorised leave of absence) or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as justification for absence.

Applications for an authorised leave of absence

Applications for authorised leave of absence during the school day will only be granted in exceptional circumstances and requests will only be considered if made through the **School Portal** using the **Leave Request form**.

The School will consider each application for an authorised leave of absence individually, taking into account the specific facts and circumstances, the pupil's past attendance record and the relevant background context behind the request.

If a leave of absence is granted, it is for the Headteacher to determine the length of the time the pupil is permitted to be away from school. It will be recorded as an authorised absence.

A leave of absence will usually be authorised for religious observance if the day concerned is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which parents and pupils belong. Parents are expected to make a request for this type of leave of absence in advance.

Apart from illness, no pupil should be away from school without prior permission.

Unauthorised absences

The 'unauthorised absence' code will be used when prior permission for absence has not been given and where the School is not satisfied with the explanation given for absence or delayed attendance, meaning that the code for 'unable to attend due to an exceptional circumstance' is not appropriate. Examples include:

- holiday that has not been authorised by the School or is in excess of the period authorised by the Headteacher;
- the reason for absence has not been provided;
- a pupil is absent from school without authorisation;
- a pupil has arrived in school after registration has closed and without reasonable explanation.

Monitoring and promoting good attendance

The School will:

- remind parents/carers of the importance of regular attendance and punctuality.
- inform parents if there are concerns regarding a child's attendance and punctuality. Children with 90% attendance or less, whatever the reason for the absence, are classified as persistent absentees.

The Senior Attendance Champion will:

- monitor progress of attendance, in partnership with the School Secretary.
- report at least half termly to the Senior Management Team to discuss attendance that is a cause for concern.
- share attendance data with the local authority.

Every entry in the school's attendance and admission registers will be preserved for six years.

Persistent or severe absence

Where absence or a pattern of absence appears to be at risk of becoming problematic, the School will meet with the parents to discuss how to support the pupil and remove barriers to attendance where possible. This may include referrals to external services and other organisations. These actions will be regularly reviewed and stepped up if there is no improvement to the situation. Where a whole family response is appropriate, this is likely to include a voluntary early help assessment. Ultimately, if voluntary support is not effective, the School will work with the local authority to put more formal measures in place. Persistent or severe absence is always treated as a potential safeguarding risk.

Pupils with individual needs

Whilst good attendance is an expectation for all pupils at the School, we recognise that this may be more of a challenge for some students, including those with special educational needs or disabilities, or those suffering from long term medical conditions or mental health issues. The School will allow for these circumstances when working with such pupils and their parents, and will develop individualised support approaches that meet their specific needs where appropriate.

Returning to school

Sometimes a student who has been absent for some time finds it difficult to return. In such circumstances the School will work with the pupil and parents to support reintegration.

Reporting duties

The School has statutory reporting obligations if a pupil fails to regularly attend and their absence is unauthorised. The School must report to the local authority absence for a period of 15 days, consecutive or cumulative, due to illness.

Each time the School's attendance register is completed it is treated as a contact point for these purposes.

Action will also be taken in accordance with the Missing Child Policy and the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy if any absence of a pupil from the School gives rise to a concern about their welfare.

Policy reviewed: September 2026

Next review: September 2027

Person responsible: The Headteacher

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Appendix 1: Attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Colour Key

Colour	Description
	Present
	Authorised Absence
	Approved Educational Activity - Counted as Present
	Unauthorised Absence
	Not Counted in Attendance Calculations

Attendance codes

Register Code	Description
/	Present AM
\	Present PM
L	Late (before registers closed) marked as present
K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority
C	Authorised absence as pupil is absent due to other authorised circumstances
C1	Leave of absence for the purpose of participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad.
C2	Leave of absence for a compulsory school age pupil subject to a part-time timetable
E	Authorised absence as pupil is excluded, with no alternative provision made
I	Illness (NOT appointments)
M	Authorised absence due to medical/dental appointments
R	Authorised absence due to religious observance
S	Authorised absence due to study leave
T	Authorised absence due to traveller absence
J1	Leave of absence for the purpose of attending an interview for admission to another educational institution

B	Approved education activity as pupil being educated off site (NOT dual registration)
P	Approved educational activity as pupil is attending an approved sporting activity
V	Approved education activity as pupil is away on an educational visit or trip
W	Approved educational activity as pupil is attending work experience
K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority
G	Unauthorised absence as pupil is on a family holiday, NOT agreed, or is taking days in excess of an agreed family holiday
N	Unauthorised absence as pupil missed sessions for a reason that has not yet been provided
O	Unauthorised absence as pupil missed sessions for an unauthorised absence not covered by any other code/description
U	Unauthorised absence as pupil arrived after registers closed
D	Dual registered. Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
X	Not required to be in school - for non-compulsory school age children
Z	Pupil not yet on roll - not counted in possible attendances
#	Planned whole or partial school closure - NOT counted in possible attendances
Q	Unable to attend the school because of a lack of access arrangements
Y1	Unable to attend due to transport normally provided not being available
Y2	Unable to attend due to widespread disruption to travel
Y3	Unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed
Y4	Unable to attend due to the whole school site being unexpectedly closed
Y5	Unable to attend as pupil is in criminal justice detention
Y6	Unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law
Y7	Unable to attend because of any other unavoidable cause