



ATTENDANCE & PUNCTUALITY POLICY

March 2020

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. Chadsgrove School is designated as a School for children with physical disabilities and/or complex medical needs. Sometimes our children may not be in school for long periods of time due to post surgery or other medical reasons. In addition, pupils may need to attend a significant number of unavoidable health appointments during school time. Often these appointments are at specialist hospitals (such as Birmingham Children's Hospital) rather than at a community hospital closer to their home and this can result in a pupil being absent from school for a whole day. However, it is important to note that, at Chadsgrove, absence rates for reasons other than ill health or medical appointments are minimal.
- 1.2. Chadsgrove School is committed to providing an outstanding education for all pupils. We believe that if pupils are to fully benefit from their education, then good attendance is crucial. As a school, we will do all we can to ensure maximum attendance for all of our pupils.
- 1.3. Chadsgrove places a high priority on ensuring that parent carers and pupils understand the importance of regular and punctual attendance. We recognise that parent carers have a vital role to play in their child's education and that there is a need to establish strong home-school links and communication systems that can be utilised whenever there are concerns about attendance.
- 1.4. In order to support with minimising learning disruptions, the school works closely with community paediatricians, the Orchard Service, the Orthotics Service and Wheelchair Services in order to facilitate appointments in school where possible, this enables pupils to stay in school rather than take time out in order to attend their appointments.

2. School Attendance and the Law

- 2.1. Children must receive an education between the school term after their 5th birthday and the last Friday in June in the school year in which they turn 16. This is known as Compulsory School Age. Chadsgrove also offers non-compulsory education to nursery children and post-16 pupils.
- 2.2. Regardless of whether pupils are of statutory school age or in non-compulsory education, the same expectations with regard to attendance apply – all pupils are expected to be in school at all times, provided that they are medically fit enough to do so.
- 2.3. Under the 1996 Education Act, parent carers are responsible for ensuring their children attend school both regularly and punctually. Failure to do so could result in legal action being taken against them by the Local Authority.
- 2.4. Under the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006, only the school (and not parent carers) can authorise an absence. Where the reason for a pupil's absence cannot be established at the time that the register is taken, the absence should be recorded as unauthorised.
- 2.5. If a reason for absence is provided by the parent carer, the school may decide to grant a leave of absence which must be recorded as an authorised using the appropriate national code.

3. Responsibilities

3.1. The Headteacher, Governors and School Staff expect pupils to attend school regularly, on time, properly equipped and ready to learn. They will:

- encourage good attendance
- communicate with parent carers as soon as possible if there is a problem with attendance or punctuality
- set a good example in matters of attendance and punctuality and promptly investigate all absenteeism and lateness
- work in partnership with parent carers and pupils to resolve issues which affect attendance or punctuality as quickly as possible
- report a pupil's attendance to their parent carer at least annually
- ensure that all staff are aware of the registration process and receive training on registration regulations
- ensure that pupils are welcomed and receive assistance following periods of absence to help them settle back into school life and catch up with any work that has been missed

3.2. The Assistant Head Teacher is responsible for

- monitoring attendance issues
- ensuring that registers are checked on a regular basis to identify any attendance or punctuality concerns
- following up on any concerns with parent carers
- liaising with the Headteacher and external agencies, as necessary, if concerns about a pupil's attendance cannot be quickly resolved

3.3. The administrative team, based in the school office, are responsible for ensuring that:

- all registers have been completed following each registration session
- registration data is available for inspection to relevant professionals
- the Assistant Head Teacher, responsible for attendance, is contacted promptly if they are unable to ascertain the reason for a pupil's absence

3.4. The class teacher (or their delegate) is responsible for:

- taking the register daily for both morning and afternoon sessions
- ensuring that each pupil is observed or called by name when the register is being taken

3.5. Parent carers are responsible for:

- ensuring their child regularly and punctually attends school, properly dressed, appropriately equipped and ready to learn
- informing the school of the reason for any absence by a telephone call before 9.30 am on the first morning of any absence
- working actively with school staff should problems with attendance develop
- ensuring that their children are well enough to attend school and understanding the importance of keeping children at home for 48 hours after they have been sick if this is due to a sickness bug
- respecting the fact that many of the children at Chadsgrove have reduced or compromised immunity and sending their child to school whilst knowingly

infected could severely compromise the health and well-being of other children at school

- 3.6. Pupils, with support as required, will
- ensure that they attend school regularly and on time
 - attend all lessons punctually

4. Registration

- 4.1. The register is a legal document and schools must, under the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006, take a register at the start of the morning session and, again, during the afternoon session. The register must be marked accurately, recording pupils' attendance or absence and, in the latter case, if this authorised or unauthorised.
- 4.2. Since September 2006, schools have been required to use statutory registration codes. At Chadsgrove, these are as follows:

| Code | Description |
|------|---|
| / | Present AM |
| \ | Present PM |
| B | Educated off site |
| C | Other Authorised Circumstances |
| E | Excluded |
| F | Extended Family Holiday (agreed) |
| G | Family Holiday (not agreed). Unauthorised |
| H | Family Holiday (agreed). Authorised |
| I | Illness |
| L | Late (After 9.30/1.30) |
| M | Medical, Dentist, Hospital |
| N | No reason Yet Given |
| O | Unauthorised not covered by other codes |
| P | Approved sporting activities |
| R | Religious Observation |
| T | Traveller Absence |
| U | Late after Registration closes. |
| V | Educational Visit or Trip. |
| Y | Enforced Closure |
| Z | Pupils not yet on Roll |
| # | School Closed to Pupils |

- 4.3. At Chadsgrove, an electronic registration system is used. The system is part of the school's Information Management System, ScholarPack. All notes from parents/carers regarding a pupil's absence will be stored on the pupil's file within ScholarPack and will be retained for a minimum period of three years.
- 4.4. Registers prior to the use of ScholarPack are centrally archived.
- 4.5. Class Teachers will complete accurate electronic registers at the beginning of each day. Registration begins at 9.00am and closes at 9.30am.

- 4.6. If a pupil arrives after the register has closed, they are expected to report to the school office in order to have their attendance recorded. Pupils arriving after the register has closed, without an acceptable reason, will be marked as having an unauthorised absence for that session.
- 4.7. A certified extract of the register can be used as evidence in legal proceedings against parents/carers for failing to ensure their child's regular attendance or in seeking an Education Supervision Order in respect of a pupil.

5. Leave of Absence

- 5.1. Amendments to the 2006 regulations remove references to family holiday and extended leave as reasons for a pupil to be allowed to be absent from school. The amendments make clear that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.
- 5.2. It is up to the Headteacher to decide what constitutes 'exceptional circumstances'. Worcestershire County Council advises that leave of absence will only be granted in the most exceptional circumstances. These may include:
- an immediate family member is critically/terminally ill
 - families who have been through a traumatic event
 - unavoidable medical/dental appointments
 - days of religious observance
 - exceptional family circumstances i.e. bereavement
 - transport arranged by the LA failing to arrive where the pupil lives beyond statutory walking distance or is reliant upon the transport due to the nature of their disability

At Chadsgrove many of our children have complex needs and require adapted accessible holiday accommodation. This accommodation is often very difficult to source during school holidays and is often limited in terms of availability. Some children need time away from school in term time to support their recovery often from surgery/chemotherapy and we believe that it is in the child's best interests (for health, physical and emotional well-being) to have a holiday during this time, particularly if they have missed several holidays in holiday time due to long hospital stays or extended periods of chemotherapy. Some of our children also struggle with having holidays at busy times because of the nature of their difficulties and may need to holiday at quieter times. We believe all of the above to be 'exceptional circumstances'.

- 5.3. It is important for the Headteacher to review each case individually and parent carers who wish to request annual leave for 'exceptional circumstances' should apply in writing to her (See Appendices 1 and 2).
- 5.4. If a request for leave is not agreed, but the leave is taken anyway, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. This may result in the Local Authority issuing a Penalty Notice. If this penalty is not paid the Local Authority will institute legal proceedings against the parent/carer in the Magistrates Court.

- 5.5. In deciding whether or not to grant the request for leave of absence the following is taken into account:
- the health and well-being of the child
 - the overall pattern of attendance
 - the age of the child
 - the phase of education
 - the time of the year and any examinations that the child may need to complete
 - the length, destination and purpose of the leave and whether it is likely to be a rare event in the life of the child
 - the family circumstances and the parent carers reasons for wanting to take their holiday during term time

- 5.6. Absence will be recorded as unauthorised when due to:

- shopping
- haircuts
- sleeping in late
- not having a uniform
- looking after brothers, sisters or unwell parents
- birthdays

6. Removing a Pupil from the Register

- 6.1. The guidance in the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006 will be followed with regard to deleting pupils from the Admission Register. The Local Authority will be informed of every pupil deleted from the Admission Register. This is currently completed by filling in an on-line form via the Worcestershire School's Portal.

- 6.2. A child's name can be removed from the register if the child has been granted a leave of absence and after absence:

- they have not returned by the agreed date
- **and** they have continued to be absent for a further twenty school days
- **and** the Headteacher is not satisfied that this is because they are ill or the absence is unavoidable

7. Procedures for Following up Absence/Lateness

- 7.1. If there are problems which affect a pupil's attendance, school staff will investigate, identify and strive, in partnership with parent carers and pupils, to resolve those problems as quickly and efficiently as possible.
- 7.2. It is the responsibility of the parent carer to contact the school on the first morning of the child's absence. If this contact is not made then Chadsgrove School will initially contact the parent carer by text message.
- 7.3. If the text message is not responded to then the parent carers will be contacted by telephone.
- 7.4. If telephone contact is not successful, then the school will attempt to contact other adults on the child's contact list held on the school's information management system (ScholarPack).

- 7.5. If necessary, school staff will make a visit to the child's house to check on their welfare.
- 7.6. In exceptional circumstances, for example, if a child is subject to a Child Protection plan or there are significant concerns about their safety/well-being, then social care or the police will be contacted promptly.
- 7.7. If poor attendance or punctuality continues and there is no authorised reason for a pupil's absence, then the Educational Welfare Officer will be informed and the parent carers may be invited in to the school for a meeting with the Headteacher. This meeting will be to identify and resolve the difficulties which are preventing the pupil from attending school. The parent carers will be made aware of the legal requirements regarding school attendance.
- 7.8. In the context of Chadsgrove School, Passenger Assistants can provide 'extra eyes and ears' in monitoring the well-being of pupils and they are requested to speak to the Designated Safeguarding Lead if they are concerned about a pupil. However, it is not the responsibility of Passenger Assistants to pass on information to the school, on behalf of parent carers, with regard to the reason for a pupil absence.

8. Long Term Absence

- 8.1. School staff will maintain regular contact with the parent carers of pupils who are absent for extended periods of time and will work with them to provide work to complete at home, as necessary. Contact will be made, with parent carers, on a regular basis to ensure that an appropriate level of support and guidance is offered by the school, as necessary. 'Keeping in Touch' is a vital part of our monitoring. (Appendix 3)
- 8.2. If school staff feel that more reassurance or information with regard to a child's illness or the reason for an absence is necessary, then a letter from the child's GP will be requested or the appropriate medical professionals (e.g. The Orchard Service) will be contacted.
- 8.3. On return to Chadsgrove, after an absence, school staff will work closely with pupils and their parent carers to help the pupil settle back into school, re-establish friendships and catch up with any work that has been missed. The pupil may be issued with an Individual Re-Integration Plan if this is considered to be appropriate (See Appendix 4).
- 8.4. If the pupil is returning to school after an absence of longer than two weeks, in exceptional circumstances, there may be provision to allow the pupil to ease back into school life gradually. This is particularly important if the pupil has had a period of significant ill health or hospitalisation.

9. Safeguarding and Children Missing from Education

- 9.1. A child going missing from education is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect. School staff are expected to follow the schools' procedure for dealing with children that go missing from education, particularly on repeat occasions as this helps to identify the

risk of abuse and neglect (including sexual exploitation and female genital mutilation). It also helps to minimise the risks of them going missing in the future. The procedure with regard to dealing with children missing from education is described, in detail, in the school's Safeguarding Children Policy.

- 9.2. The Attendance Lead and the Designated Safeguarding Lead work closely to manage risks and ensure multi agency collaboration, where necessary, so that pupils receive the appropriate level of help or intervention in order to ensure that they attend school regularly.
- 9.3. There may be particular concerns with regard to the absence of pupils who are subject to 'Child in Need' or 'Child Protection Plans' and the school office are made aware of any pupils whose absence needs to be escalated immediately rather than progressing through the usual absence procedures. The Designated Safeguarding Lead makes a decision with regard to who these pupils may be and informs both the office staff and the Senior Leadership Team accordingly.

10. Strategies for Promoting Attendance/Punctuality

- 10.1. The following strategies are in place to monitor a pupil absence and support excellent attendance, wherever possible, from all pupils
 - attendance statistics are collected and used to inform any necessary interventions
 - expectations, with regard to attendance and punctuality, are made clear to parent carers in the 'Home School Agreement', and on the School website
 - opportunities to maintain awareness through newsletters, parent carer evenings and pupil reports are regularly used
 - parent carers, pupils and staff are regularly reminded of what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absence
 - pupils with a known attendance problem being admitted to school will be interviewed with the parent carers and will be set targets for improvement

This policy will be reviewed to its effective implementation on an annual basis and updated as appropriate.

Appendix 1

Guidance Notes for Parents/Carers requesting Leave in Term Time

1. Parent carers wishing the school to consider granting leave of absence in school term time should read these notes carefully and then complete and send to the Headteacher the request form below. This form should be sent to the school in time for the request to be considered **well before** the desired period of absence.
2. Parent carers are strongly advised not to finalise any holiday booking arrangements before receiving the school's decision on their request. In any event the request form must be received by the school at least four weeks before the departure date to allow sufficient time for appropriate consideration.
3. The granting of leave of absence in school term time is, by law, a matter for consideration and decision by the school. There is no automatic right to any leave in term time. The Department for Education (DfE) and Worcestershire County Council (WCC) policy is that family holidays should not be taken in school term time. Where such requests are made, for the leave to be granted, the Headteacher should decide if there are **exceptional circumstances**.
4. Each case will be considered individually and on its own merits. Parent carers need, therefore, to consider very carefully before making any request for leave of absence the demands of the National and wider School Curriculum especially at the Key Stage assessment stage. In considering a request, the school will take account of: -
 - the **exceptional** circumstances stated that have given rise to the request;
 - the age of the child;
 - the stage of the child's education and progress and the effects of the requested absence on both elements;
 - the overall attendance pattern of the child;
 - the nature of the trip.Pupils on examination courses or due to take SATS will **not** normally be granted leave of absence.
5. Where parent carers have children in more than one school a separate request must be made to each school. The Headteacher of each school will make their own decision based on the factors relating to the child at their school. It is possible that because of these factors different decisions may be made. It is hoped that if this situation arises parents/carers will be persuaded to accept the reasons for refusal given and, thereby, withdraw any other requests.
5. Where requests for a grant of leave of absence are received from only one parent carer the response letter – agreeing or refusing – will be either addressed to both/all parent carers where they live at the same address or to each where they do not. This is to ensure, particularly in the case of a refusal, that both or all 'parent carers' are fully aware of the consequences of ignoring a refusal as the refusal letter clearly states that each parent carer will receive a penalty notice.

6. Should the school decide to grant leave of absence but, the child **does not return to school at the time s/he was expected to** (i.e. following the expiry of the granted leave of absence period) and, no information is available to the school to explain/justify the continuing absence or, make known the whereabouts of the child, **his/her place at the school could be lost.**
7. Should the School decide not to grant leave of absence and parents still take their child out of school the absence will be recorded as unauthorised which may be subject to a Holiday Penalty Notice fine of £60 per parent per child. If not paid within 21 days this fine increases to £120 per parent per child. Failure to pay the £120 fine within the period 22 to 28 days may lead to Court proceedings.

Appendix 2



CHADSGROVE SCHOOL
Request for Leave during Term Time



To: The Headteacher of Chadsgrove School

Date.....

I request consideration of a grant of leave of absence from school during term time for:

my child (full name).....

for the period from (date) to (date)

The **exceptional** circumstances and reason for this request are:

.....
.....
.....

I have (an)other child(ren) in (an)other school(s) as follows

Child(ren) (full name(s))School(s) attended

.....
.....

(Signature of 1st Parent/Carer(s).....Print Name.....

(Signature of 2nd Parent/Carer(s) Print Name.....

Please return completed form to the school office. The school will write to you and inform you of the decision on whether the request is authorised or not.

For Office Use Only

Current Attendance.....%

Last Year's Attendance.....%

Number of school sessions taken as leave during term time ...'(this Academic Year)

Agreed/Not Agreed

Request for leave is agreed/is not agreed for the above student to take leave during term time between the above dates.

Signed Date

Notification of decision: Date letter sent to parent

Appendix 3

Children who are absent from school – ‘Keeping in Touch’

We are ever mindful at Chadsgrove that our pupils have complex medical needs and often require numerous medical appointments/surgery in school hours. In order to maximise the consistency of learning across the curriculum and help our children to ‘keep in touch’ with school, we do the following in line with the curriculum, providing the child is well enough (often our children are very poorly) to complete work:

- Send work home linked to their EHCP/class curriculum
- Give access to suitable websites that we use in school to support learning e.g. Busy Things, Oxford Reading Tree Buddy, RM Maths, Lexia, Education City
- Home visits from school staff
- Phone calls home
- Hospital visits
- Sending cards and video clips from the class

Our teaching is highly personalised so when children are off school we can match work to their individual needs. The curriculum is highly differentiated so when they return to school, we can teach from where the child is, in term of their level of skills and may re-assess them depending on the result of treatment/surgery.

Appendix 4

Individual Reintegration Plan

Date

People involved

Key Action Points